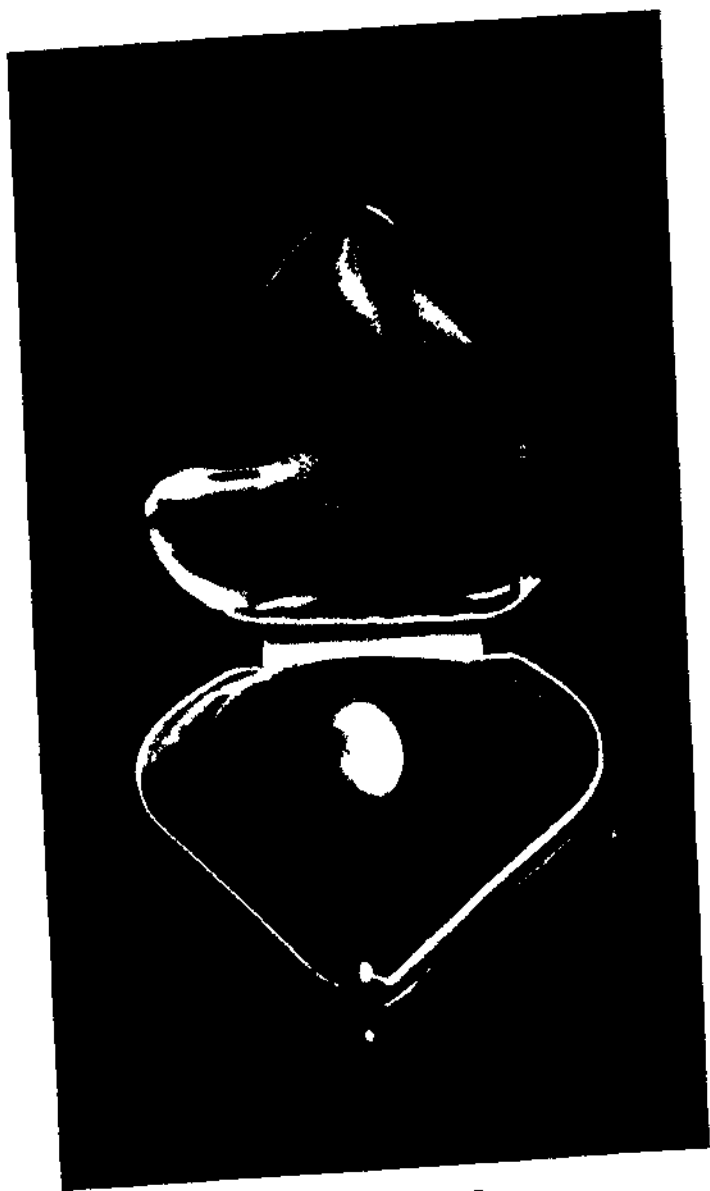


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TRADE WINDS



THE "ADÈLE," A PARAGON PEARL.

TRADE WINDS

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**TO
MY WIFE**

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CHAPTER

THE PEARL SHELL

A PEARL shell as large as a soup-plate, no more. That is all it was. A brilliantly nacreous thing with a natural polish, smooth as a mirror and reflecting not only my still youthful features, but also, it seemed, some of the things the future promised to hold for me.

How interesting, and how foolish, to believe that one can see into the future at the magic touch of some alien thing and vaguely guess one's destiny in a waking dream !

It happened in the prosaic London Docks, that staid businesslike place with its background of romance. As the man lifted the pearl shell out of the open case for me to admire its unusual size and weight, I did what probably nine women out of ten would have done in similar circumstances. I eyed myself carefully in the smooth and shining surface. Presently the reflection of my own face seemed gradually to fade, and even as I looked there took shape in my mind the vision of a life oddly governed by the moon-fired stones of my future love.

The vision faded. I stood like a ninny with the shell in my hand. The man nudged me and said, "Trying to drill holes into this shell with your eyes ?"

"No," I said apologetically. "I've been dreaming. These outlandish things seem to awaken in me the desire to travel, that's all."

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"That's all," echoed the man; "yes, and when a fellow's put the sea between Lunnon an' hisself he wants to be back again!"

Being what he was, a decent shell sorter and no philosopher, how was he to know that men neither come nor go according to their own desire?

For in the end, when I did travel, I didn't particularly want to go; nor when the time came to return had I accomplished all I had set out to do.

The sheer need for cash starts more men off on adventures than your romantic would allow. I was in sore straits for money. It seemed to me then that I needed it more than any man in England. True, I had frozen assets representing the savings of several years activity as a gem merchant in "the Garden." My three morocco leather wallets were bulging with an assortment of aquamarines, tourmalines, peridots, moonstones and cat's-eyes. Eighteen-hundred pounds worth—if anyone wanted them. But no one did. That was the trouble.

Then came along one Baer, who cunningly valued my stock at treble its cost and assured me that he could sell and get the cash for me all right. I was as blind as a bat. He got the stock and twelve years passed before I saw him again.

Baer it was, however, who was the cause of my seeing the world in a way I had never expected. I was sure in my mind that he had gone beyond the seas. But whether to Malaya, Java, China, India or South America I could not even venture to guess.

All I knew was that I should meet him again and have it out with him some time. And so I did, but not as I expected.

Hatton Garden was a strange rendezvous of merchants

THE PEARL SHELL

and adventurers twenty-five years ago. Peculiar things happened there every day. One constantly rubbed shoulders with queer characters. I remember many of them vividly to this day, and if their life stories were collected and printed they would make exciting reading. I suppose you would call some of them out-and-out crooks, but I prefer to think that they merely had a kink which did not go clear through.

It is strange how things come about. One day there appeared at my small office in "the Garden" a young fellow with a sackful of pearl shells. Would I buy?

"How much?"

"Four pounds for the lot."

"I'll give you five," I said, "if you will tell me where you got them."

"That's easy money," he replied. "I got them from a fellow at the docks."

"Very well," I said, "show me the fellow and I'll pay you."

He took me down to the docks, introduced me to the man from whom he had bought them, and I learnt what I had been longing to know. That was when I saw the future in a pearl shell. And the young fellow who carted that heavy sack of pearl shell up three flights of rickety wooden stairs to my office is to-day a power in "the Garden." Every time I meet him at the "Old Bell" I say to him: "What price pearl shells?" As regularly as I ask him he responds with a broad grin, "You know, the extra quid you gave me bought a lot of good things in Farringdon Market that day!"

CHAPTER II

THE JOURNEY OUT

WITHIN a few weeks of my visit to the London Docks I met in Paris a German Jew who had made his pile in the Argentine, but was still greedy for more money. He it was whom I interested in my dreams. But it was some time before I could get him warmed up to my pearl buying and pearl fishing proposition. Finally, however, he consented to back me on a profit-sharing basis, provided all my purchases were shipped to him for disposal. And so at last I found myself on the high seas bound for the pearl fisheries of Western Australia.

Fortunately for me the R.M.S. *Ortona* carried no fourth-class passengers; thus I was privileged to bunk third. I had booked to Fremantle in Western Australia, where I was to tranship into a steamer bound for the "Never Never Land," 1,500 miles up the nor'west coast.

I had not the faintest misgivings, and was positive I would return with a fortune, and, what was more, I had high hopes of meeting in my journeyings with that rogue of a broker, Baer.

The voyage was not very exciting. Indeed to me it was a great disappointment, for I had expected adventures from the word go. But I was not sea-sick once, saw neither whales nor sea-serpents, there was no hint of a mutiny on board, nor even the possibility of a single mild burial at sea. Everybody on board remained shockingly healthy. If we did pass a pirate vessel, neither officers, crew nor passengers recognised it.

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Forty-two days sped swiftly enough, however, in spite of this lack of excitement, and one very bright morning my trunks were put ashore. That was the only real indication I had that the Orient Mail Line had kept faith with me and had complied with their bargain. By rights I should have stood on my head, for was this not the Antipodes? But never more than now had I greater need of standing squarely on firmly planted feet.

What a simple chap I was in those days! Fancy a passenger, and a third-class passenger at that, seeking out the captain of a big liner to thank him for bringing him safely across a mere 10,000 miles of salt sea! But that is what I did!

O'Brien at the "Oriental" entertained me for a week at the rate of a pound per day "all in" (he said), but I judged it was "all out." But I got even with him by spending no money at the bar, although the young priestess who officiated there was pleasant company at meal times. She was a delightful and perfectly good girl, but amazed me greatly by her daring, for she offered me nothing less than her company in the far nor'west if I'd set out with her via the Registrar.

I replied that this did not come within the range of practical politics.

She stopped picking the chicken bone in her hand and said: "And, please, why not?"

"Well," I said between taking a mouthful of green salad and handing my neighbour on the left the mustard pot, "a wife and two children in London supply three very good reasons I should say."

"Then why didn't you let on?" she pouted and passed the potatoes and greens to the fellow on the other side of her who, I was sure, had less need of them than I.

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The W.A.S.S. Company provided the vessel which took me up the 1,500 miles to the "Never Never Land." All I remember of her is that she was "just" seaworthy. So was the food, which is a more vivid memory.

After the first round of drinks the passengers called each other by their Christian names, and after the first meal we knew each other's business. A motley crowd we were: a schoolmaster, a lawyer, a missionary, several up-coast store-keepers, a score of itinerant sheep shearers, two or three ranch owners, a couple of miners, a prospector, myself in quest of pearls.

One of the ranchers was on his way to Java with intent to paint Sourabaya red. This was his first holiday in twenty years. He owned 60,000 acres of land, I was told, some 120,000 sheep, and had any amount of money in the bank. He was clad in a pair of pyjamas of the most primitive cut and of such a vivid crimson check pattern as I had never seen before in a man's garment. He went about in this apparel at all times while on board, for prior to setting out on this trip he had consulted his shearers on the latest male fashions. One wag had told him that pyjamas were all the rage in London. It was scarcely for us to disillusion him. But when I think of him even now after all these years I chuckle to myself; and then I stop to wonder whether he was quite the ass he pretended to be. Maybe he had *us* on a string.

Ten days of apparently interminable grind up the bleak flat sandy coast, monotonous, deadly. We stop at every small port, discharge a few Chinks, crates of onions, sacks of potatoes, coal, timber, windmills in sections, cases of bottled beer. First port, Geraldton—wooden jetty, weather-board and tin-roofed bungalows, sand ankle-deep—slatish-grey in places, rust-red in others—male white

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population about five score, females in strict seclusion, whether owing to the heat of the day or to the jealousy of their owners impossible for a stray sojourner to tell. Chinks do the store-keeping, the market gardening, the laundering. Of aborigines I see only one, a spindle-legged, huge-nosed, coal-black, woolly-headed Bhinghi. He peeps timidly from behind a curtained verandah, but comes out when I offer him a smoke. He grabs it and vanishes.

Shark's Bay, Roebuck, Onslow, Port Headland, Broome, these are the ports in their order of call. All are patterned, with minor variations, on the one described. A grim coast indeed.

A fellow-passenger called Hyams, an Australian-born Jew, a prospector for gold by trade, asked me to go ashore with him when we docked at Geraldton. I said I would, so after a drink or two in the first saloon we came to we went for a brisk trot which took us a few miles beyond the Settlement—for you couldn't call it a town.

Every now and then my companion would stop to scrutinise the geological formation of the ground, and from a ridge here and there he dug a bit of stone which he cracked with the little hammer he carried.

I became quite interested in this—to me—novel game, but naturally I did not expect him to find anything that might turn out any good; for these things only happen in story-books.

However, to my astonishment and no doubt to his own too, Hyams hit upon something that made him start, whistle low and look me all over as though to assure himself that I was worthy of his confidence. But to my questions he only replied with grunts, between his stooping, searching and cracking of further specimens.

At last he stretched himself and said: "It's a bit of all

right. The best luck I've had in a very long while. We'll stake out I guess, you and I."

He crammed his pockets with several handfuls of crumbled rock from what he called the "swellest outcrop" he had yet struck. Then he carefully noted the landmarks, and we jogged it back to Geraldton. In one of the first buildings we came to was located a branch office of the West Australian Bank. He went in and I followed. The manager, teller and clerk, all in one, was as interested and excited as Hyams and I after he had heard the story. Immediately he provided a couple of pans and even led us to the water cistern in the yard behind. Having locked the front door from inside, he joined us and anxiously watched the panning out.

Hyams said the result was too good for words. The bank manager, who also knew a thing or two of the game, bore him out. Hyams said the next step was into the nearest saloon. Well, as he was an old hand and I a mere novice, I took his word for it and meekly followed his lead.

Now the saloon was full of sheep shearers, some of whom knew Hyams of old. Some others did not and wouldn't have cared if the earth had opened and swallowed him right there before their eyes. But Hyams insisted on shouting drinks for all.

In due course each of these men wanted to shout back, partly because none would risk being thought a sponger and partly because the cheques they had received for the last big shearing were already lodged with the landlord, and they itched to get a move on—which could not be, naturally, until the saloonman told them that the tap had run dry—for them.

But Hyams made himself a perfect nuisance and insisted

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that to-day belonged to him. The others thought to-morrow was a long way off and possibly might never come. Moreover, who was this little Jew-man to be wanting to shout every time? You can imagine the state Hyams was in by the time he offered in turn to kiss the barman and to fight the whole bloody lot of sheep shearers gathered round the rail, and me too, his partner to be.

Finally they had to carry him into a back room to prevent bloodshed, but he wouldn't stay put until they locked the door on him.

I was still listening to him kicking the door down when the syren of our steamer suddenly proclaimed that she was going to pull out. I stood for a while in the open door not knowing what to do for the best. Then I argued that I'd be the cobbler who sticks to his last. I had come to Australia for pearls and pearls it should be. I would leave the gold-digging to Hyams. With this decision, I sprinted down the road towards the jetty and got on board just before the gang-plank was pulled away. A moment later we backed out.

A few months later, when I had almost forgotten Hyams, some fellows coming up the coast mentioned his name and told me that he had hit upon a really big thing and was growing richer every day. I had, it was clear, missed my first big chance in Australia. But I was not sorry, for I could not have lived alongside of Hyams, gold or no gold.

At Shark's Bay, our next port of call, I said to the first white man I met on the road: "Have you folks got any blinking eau de Cologne factories here?"

"What are you driving at, stranger?" he said.

"Do you cork your noses, then, that you can't smell?"

"Oh, you mean the smell from the pearl oysters."

"Do they smell as vile as that?" I remarked. "Surely a dozen open sewers would not cause such a stink!"

"Well," he replied, "if you've any doubt, go across to that Chink's yard over there and smell for yourself."

I held a double fold of handkerchief to my face and followed my nose. True, there were barrels full of putrefying pearl oysters of small size standing about. Yellow men, stripped to the waist, were pouring hot water into the casks and stirring the mixture with long bamboo poles. This, after some time, was transferred into other casks, strained through a doubled square of cheese-cloth, and what was left atop were yellowish seed-pearls, the largest no bigger than pin-heads.

"Have you any bigger ones?" I asked the boss Chink. He displayed a row of gold-filled teeth and led me into his parlour. He tossed a few small round pieces into a china dish for my inspection, but his price was sky high.

"Too much money," I said.

He scratched his bare belly, and replied: "Canton pay velly good plice; more better I sell Canton." And that was that.

At Onslow three days later I was to sleep ashore that night in a real bed for a change, but when the hostel-keeper's wife turned over the mattress a snake came wriggling out from between blankets and sheets, so I got no sleep at all. Instead I went for a walk with another fellow. We went out into the bright moonshine along the Ashburton River. We came at length on a deserted gold-mining camp. The pans were there, the cooking pots, the spades and everything, just as they had been left when the gold-rush to Kalgoorie caused such a stir.

We stood and waited for someone to come out of some forsaken shanty or tumble-down hut, but no one came. The

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quiet place gave us the creeps. We trotted back without talking, occupied with our own thoughts, until we came to a kind of slushy sandy bog and found a man who had got fast stuck in it.

We gave him a hand out, and when I looked at him closely I found he was an old acquaintance of mine, a London chap. He too could not flower in "the Garden," where I used to see him occasionally.

His was a strange profession. He was a pearl doctor, or more correctly a pearl surgeon, and rather clever at his work. He had a wooden leg and, although a thoroughly good fellow, always put me in mind of the cook in *Treasure Island*. Eventually, strange to say, he did discover an Isle of Treasure—but not for himself.

He had another wooden possession, a heavy black ebony cane with a huge silver knob. By these two wooden tokens I had always been able to spot him right from the other end of "the Garden."

It was strange, this meeting at such a time and place and in so unexpected a manner. He explained that he had been waiting for more than two weeks for the return of some pearling luggers which made this their port and that he had become fed up with nothing to do. During the day it was too hot to go out, so he slept. The lovely moonlight night had tempted him to take a stroll as it had tempted us, but his wooden leg had played him false, as we had seen.

The day after this adventure he repaid me for saving his life by the gift of a heaped dish of Onslow tomatoes. I have never tasted anything half as good before or since. They were local grown, and if ever I visit that coast again I shall leave pearl-buying to others and buy Onslow tomatoes instead.

As for my friend Leon the pearl doctor, I met him again

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a year later in Singapore for the last time. He roamed about the world for a long while, but finally came to anchor in South-Western Australia. There he prospered for nearly twenty years. But, as you will hear later, that wooden leg of his got him in the end. Poor rich Leon ! I should have liked to have met him in prosperity.

At Port Headland I saw camels and Afghan camel-drivers bringing lead and tin ore from far away inland. I also saw a huge stack of bagged tantalum ore. The owner did not know what to do with it. No one else there knew of a use for it. I could have bought the lot for a case of whisky. But it was my ignorance this time that made me miss my second chance since coming to Australia.

How vivid and lasting are first impressions ! Twenty-three years have gone since the day I first landed in Broome, but my memory of it is still almost photographic : the gorgeous day, the vessel slowly steaming into the bay, the large almost festively-arrayed crowd on the long wooden jetty (where later, on most evenings, I was to seek the cool breezes). They had come to welcome us, these white, yellow and black folk. What a crowd ! Much waving of handkerchiefs and topees and a great deal of shouting too, from shore to ship and ship to shore, as we drew alongside the jetty.

At last we could distinguish faces. Said Mac the steward, who stood by my side : " I hae ma doots but you'll be itching to know who's who in this place. Let me introduce you to them. See that fellow wi' the blotchy face and the dark sun glasses. He's one of those you'll have to get next to—that's John Tiddles.

" That fellow behind him, next the pile of shell cases, the skinny chap in the big topee, is Syd Lang—a pearler. He always carries a book of poetry in his pocket, but he's

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nae softie for a' that I warn ye. But the fellow you'll be most up against is yon chap with the open sunshade. He is Simmons, brother-in-law and manager to Roth the big boss pearl buyer. Look out for him. He hates competition and he'll try to run you out o' town."

A promising introduction !

This was my first impression of Broome and an abiding one. Even now I see Pearltown, metropolis of the "Never Never Land," set high on a jutting bluff facing blue shark-infested seas, and nothing much but sand behind it ; red and yellow sand and low scrub in between sparse patches of long coarse spinifex.

"Queer grass," I remember saying to myself on my first walk beyond the settlement. "Queer grass that will cut like a saw and stab like a dagger."

The sand flies soon knew that I had landed and the wily anopheles quickly scented red European blood, while the Pearltown sun made frantic efforts to parboil my poor brains.

"What a welcome to the stranger!" I thought. "Will man be kinder?"

CHAPTER III

AUSTRALIAN WELCOME

THE town of Broome when I first came to it consisted of some sixty plain verandahed weather-board and corrugated-iron bungalows. The double chains running over the roofs and firmly anchored in the ground puzzled me. However, I soon learnt that if roofs were not chained in these parts the occasional willie-willies—the local brand of hurricane—would deposit them a mile or so away. And willie-willies gave no notice at all of their coming.

Of saloons there were three, but the hostels in connection with them were merely side-shows. The police had a small station, the Archdeacon his tin tabernacle set on a sandhill, the Bhinghi cattle thieves their spacious gaol, and the Jap women their miniature Yoshiwara. A cosy place !

The few irregular streets were unpaved, as I had expected, but the rust-red desert sand which ate into socks and engulfed your ankle at every step had not been in my programme.

The "Spotted Deer" was reputed to be the best house in town, possibly because it had two billiard tables with four legs apiece. I came across another saloon later where the billiard table only had three legs, but the Koepang crews who resorted to it took no notice of such trifles. The landlord of the "Spotted Deer" was genuine *café-au-lait*. The white trash called him scathingly a "Manila-man" and cussed his white Australian wife up and down for having hitched up with him. But he was not a bad chap.

AUSTRALIAN WELCOME

He owned a fleet of pearling luggers and provided generously for his wife's ten children.

His great passion was the lawn. He christened it the "English lawn." The pains he took over it! It was no larger than a single sheet. He spoon-fed the tender grass blades and knew each one by name. None of us dared touch Jose's "English lawn" with the tip of our shoe or he'd sing out double-quick: "Keep off that lawn, d'you hear!" And then ecstatically: "Isn't she a be-au-ti-ful English lawn?" I strongly suspected that each time the drinks were on Jose he had discovered a fresh blade of grass.

Jose's wife was fond of jewellery. She wore so many rings that you had to guess the fingers. She was pretty in a healthy animal sort of way and loved to be flattered. However, the grub she provided drove me from the "Spotted Deer" in less than a week. I fled to the "Diver's Rest."

As soon as Barbados Jim, the handy man, had set down my trunks in the corridor I made haste to unpack and discard my superfluous junk. There was a tidy heap of it too. The glass showed 116 in the shade, the sweat poured from me, and the beastly sand flies made unpacking a deuce of a job. Stiff with stooping, I raised myself painfully and looked about. A long way down the corridor my eyes caught the glance of a pair of gimlet eyes above some scarlet cretonne curtains.

As I moved the eyes followed me. Were these the eyes of friend or foe, of man or beast or bird? I had to know. I picked up the first two things that came to hand, a much-battered hat—a wide-brimmed Port Said straw—and a briar so rank that no sailor would have put his lips to it for a wager. These I held up and beckoned to the Eyes.

Slowly the curtains parted and there stepped out, to my surprise—what was it? a black polished onyx figure or a Bhinghi female in her own glossy naked skin?

I blushed for her and half turned the other way to save her modesty. But she, unmindful of anything but the proffered gifts, drew timidly nearer by degrees, just as a squirrel in the park might, to seize a tempting nut from a friendly man, but even more warily.

Then the straw hat was seized and clapped slantwise on her woolly head and the fearsome briar was thrust straight-way between her jaws. For one moment she stood there for me to admire, then grinned, turned and fled.

Next day I hung out my shingle. "Pearl Buyer" was painted on it in large letters, so large that you could read it from far out in the bay. But the following morning it was gone. It must have been a thorn in somebody's flesh, for when I searched for it I found it adorning an unmentionable place.

However, when my shingle had been allowed to stay undisturbed in its place for a day and a half the Corporal of Police thought it was time I took out a pearl-buyer's licence. I was loth to part with ten pounds before I had had time to test the magic of my sign, and gave him jaw for saying a few things he had no business to say. Then I paid up, and even added ten shillings extra as a peace offering.

The Corporal of Police returned the compliment by giving me some good advice. He told me what would happen to me if at any time I bought "snide"—that is, if I got *caught* at the game.

As soon as he had gone I had out my dictionary and looked for the new word. But it was not in the dictionary that I found it stood for pearls that had been stolen from

their rightful owner by the men of the lugger crews. I also discovered the "snide" law stood for ornament on the West Australian statute book, for no one ever got caught over "snide" in Broome.

I found the Corporal leaning against the bar, presumably drinking my health with the ten shillings I had given him. I joined him to draw him out.

"How many luggers did you say there were in this place, Corporal?"

"More than three hundred."

"Each belonging to a different owner?"

"No, bless you, some pearlers have three or four. The largest fleet is Streamer's. They own twenty-two, I think, besides some schooners to take out supplies and bring in shell."

"How are they manned?"

"Well, there is the 'Cap,' that's the owner, the shell-opener or supercargo if you like, the number one diver and the trial man. They dive in turns. The man who tends the diver and holds the signal rope when he is down below is the tender. Then there is the common crew; the cook, the four chaps to man the pump in turns, two extra hands, nine or ten all told."

"Is the diving risky in these waters?"

"Yes and no—anyway, it's no more dangerous than anywhere else. We lose no more than two or three a week all told—Japs—Malays—Manila-men—the sea ain't particular."

"Who dive the best?"

"Japs, you bet! The little chaps have guts, though we don't like them."

"And what race makes the best crews?"

"There ain't much to choose. The owners favour

mixing 'em for greater safety. You see the Manila men, the Malays and the Japs could never pull together in any dirty piece o' work. It shortens the chance of mutiny considerably."

"What about your own black-fellows? Is there no room for them in the scheme of things?"

"No, we don't work them on the boats or anywhere on shore. We're dead against black labour. This is a white man's land, and don't you forget it."

"But these others, Corporal, Japs, Filipinos, Koepang men—they aren't whites?"

"That's all right. The law makes an exception of these northern parts, but for pearling only. The coloured men come in under contract and are sent out again when their time's up."

"I see. But haven't you a chain gang? Scores and scores of black-fellows, your own natives, breaking stones on the roads? I've seen them myself, working in a broiling sun with leg-irons on their ankles and chained to each other; an awful sight!"

"Oh, that crowd! Why, they're in mostly for killing cattle. That has got to be stopped at any cost. But what's more important still, we must have roads. Who's to make 'em? But don't you stand there criticising our way of doin' things!"

"Have another drink, Corporal," I said.

And so I learnt that the diver's pay was six pounds a month plus tucker; twelve shillings besides on each ton of pearl shell and 10 per cent. on any gems—but not a penny on common baroque. The crews, he said, only received two pounds a month plus tucker and nothing on anything else except gaol if caught with "snide."

"The pearl shell brings a hundred and eighty pounds

AUSTRALIAN WELCOME

in the open market and the big boss buyers have it all their own bloody way. The damned pearlers are a mangy lot, and the scurvy supercargoes are thieving crows, although I says it as should not."

He hiccupped disdainfully when he spoke of the stingy saloon-keepers in town, nor did he spare his own understrappers whom he dubbed cadging boozefighters and gangrened pimps—for he was just in the mood to tackle all that were for or against the Government.

Being a gallant Irishman even in his cups, he spared the ladies. But how much more information could you wish to get for five rounds of "Three Star," three of gin and bitters, and a Benedictine or two thrown in?

The party who had painted my shingle was an irresponsible Irishman, good-natured and kind as most of his countrymen are when they take it into their head to be generous. He thought I was working too hard and needed some diversion. He had borrowed a small sailing boat and offered to take me for a sail in the bay. It was a welcome change from the broiling heat and the sand. We sailed from the mangrove creek most serenely, but the good fellow was only a fair-weather sailor; and as luck would have it, as soon as we were out in the open water a stiffish breeze sprang up. I don't know what he did to the sails, but they obviously had a grudge against him. The boat turned turtle and we clung to the keel awhile until he shouted "sharks." Then I let go and struck out frantically for the shore. Until then I had thought I could swim just twice the length of the public baths at home. I had never thought I could ever go at such a speed through water. The shore seemed miles away. Actually it was not a quarter of a mile, but with sharks about that was more than enough. I was nearly all in when I grabbed

the steps of the long jetty and drew myself out of the water.

The Irishman was close on my heels. He hadn't wasted time either. He tried to explain how it all happened, but I wanted to know who was going to pay for the boat, as he hadn't a bean in the world. However, we wrung out our clothes and made for the town. The first fellow who came towards us, as we still shivered and dripped water on the ground at every step, remarked: "We watched you chaps from the balcony of the 'Spotted Deer.'" Then turning to me he said: "I had a pahnd on you that you would be drahned and now I've lost the pahnd. I always said you were no bloody good."

I'm afraid he only echoed what many others felt towards the new chum. Someone, I could tell, was craftily at work to set the pearlers against me.

That the big boss pearl-buyers did not look with favour upon the newcomer I could well understand. Three out of the four big established concerns took the intrusion as a matter of course. Their resistance was merely passive. But Simmons, who was acting manager for Roth, his absent millionaire brother-in-law, used every means in his power to down any new pearl-buyer who tried to set up in town.

As I had presented him with a letter of introduction on my arrival in Broome from one of his London associates, he could do no less than ask me to dine with him. But the meal had not proceeded far when he began to show the cloven hoof. Seeing that I could not dodge talking shop I took the occasion to explain that I was only a small man and not likely to prove a dangerous competitor. "As a matter of fact what I want to buy is what you big buyers scorn as too poor for your attention—the meanest baroque and seed pearls."

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"I don't want to know your plans," he said, more peevishly than the matter warranted. "And you don't need to tell me your means. This is a free country. But Broome is only a small spot in big Australia, and I don't see why everyone who thinks he knows the difference between an oyster shell and a glass bead and has a little borrowed capital should inflict himself on this community. Those who have been established here for years *can't* like it, as you may guess, and *don't* like it, as I now assure you."

"But why?" I asked.

"Why! I'll tell you why! Perhaps you don't know that most of the luggers are tied to one or the other of the big buyers. The owners are bound by contract to give us the first refusal of their catch, and so the chances are that whatever is offered outside is 'snide.' Now we won't stand for that sort of thing. It has to be put down. I am going to put it down. You small interlopers make for dishonesty among the crews. You can't be allowed to buy any pearls here. I might not have warned you like this, but you come from a friend, and it is my duty to save you if I can. Take my word for it, this is not a healthy place for you. You go somewhere else up the coast where there aren't people like us to fight!"

"Thanks for the good advice," I said, "but I've come too far to be chased away without having tried, at any rate, to earn my living here. After all, I have just taken out a buyer's licence, so I presume the authorities haven't conferred a monopoly of the trade on you."

I spoke calmly, but inside I was raging and fretfully fingering the briar in my pocket, for I was longing to bite into something even if it was only the vulcanite stem of my only real friend in these parts. But I remembered in time that to bring it out would give offence on this Sabbath eve

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to my ultra-orthodox host. It was a great relief when the guttering candles had burnt down into their sockets, for they could not be replaced on this sacred night, and this gave me an excuse for taking a more or less graceful leave.

On my way home I met on the starlit lonesome road a Greek who gave me a friendly greeting. He had been spending a pleasant evening at the "Spotted Deer," and now, at peace with all the world, between bland smiles and liquor-scented hiccups, he confided to me that he had bought this day from a nigger two live turtles. If I cared, he said, to come to his place in two days' time there would be turtle soup and turtle steak for me. More than that, if I came in on the morrow late in the evening after supper I might even be privileged to watch him despatch the brutes, which at that moment were taking exercise in his backyard.

As I had read how hard turtles were to kill, I promised to turn up and watch Popetopulos' skill. His place was close by the "Diver's Rest." Although by profession a diver for sponge who had drifted by easy stages from the Ionian Isles to the Buccaneer Archipelago, and thence to the bluff on Broome headland, he had for want of better occupation set on the porch of his bungalow a small narra table and two rickety bentwood chairs. These he had named a restaurant. There he purveyed sea-food in ancient Greek style to all men, irrespective of colour. What distinguished his eating-house from any other in town was the 3-inch wide leather belt around the proprietor's waist, a wire-brush growth of hair on his upper lip, and the perfume of garlic which greeted you at twenty paces range.

I looked forward to the promised treat. But for the tragi-comedy always connected with the taking of life the Greek on the following day unwittingly substituted *opéra bouffe*. The first of the two turtles he tackled had made

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up its mind not to die just then and opposed a rubber-tyred neck to the Greek's specially ground carving knife. He stabbed, slashed, sawed, hacked, chopped, and eventually the head came off. But when he cut the belly part from the carapace the bleeding thing seemed more alive than ever. Every nerve in that torn body asserted itself and rose in revolt. When he threw the chunks of flesh into the boiling water they leaped out as fast as he threw them in. At last he got so angry that he picked up the head from the floor to talk Greek at the wide-open eyes, but his hand came too near the gaping mouth. It closed on his first finger and bit it clean off.

I thought it a great privilege for any creature to be able to bite his enemy after death, but Popetopulos thought he wouldn't kill the other turtle that night. So after having iodined and bandaged what remained of his finger I left him to curse the offending head and stepped out into the night.

As I walked home three sentiments within me fought for supremacy: admiration for the lowly animal's staying power, delight over the Greek's discomfiture, and disgust with myself for having gone to witness the killing of a fellow-creature.

The host of southern stars came out to light me home. They shone with unusual splendour, I thought, and twinkled as though to convey a message to me. I tried hard to understand, but the best I could make of it was, "It's too glorious a night for killing or being killed."

CHAPTER IV

“ SNIDE ”

DA SILVA was an honest Cingalee from Gall. He was the pearl-doctor employed by a big local firm of pearl-buyers. His pay was eight pounds per month. In two years he had saved sufficient money to buy three good-sized tea plantations back home.

One day in the billiard room of the “ Star ” Da Silva managed to catch my eye, and on his way out he brushed past me and whispered : “ Master, to-night when the moon goes up there will be good fishing from the long jetty. Bring your line and bait, master, and you’ll find good fish.”

“ Hello ! ” I thought, “ what is that fellow’s game ? I must find out.”

The long wooden pier jutted a good half mile out to sea at high water. At the ebb you could walk around the pilings at the far end or race the crabs to their holes in the slushy mud. On this evening the moon was rising over the bay, when I passed several pigtailed fellows casting their baited lines over the pier railings. I walked on, and found Da Silva already fishing. I made certain that he had seen me and then took up my station some little distance from him. I saw that the Chinese fishers were watching me.

Casting my line I soon became absorbed in the sport, for the bay was alive with red snappers and stingarees. I had entirely forgotten Da Silva until presently I became aware that he stood over me.

“Master,” he whispered without any preliminary, “you buy fifty-grain round pearl, oh such a beautiful thing—you got thousand pounds in your pockit? If not I trust you. Master, you can sell it for two thousand, sure. I’ve got her here, you like to see?”

“No,” I said, “you’re not a pearler, and I don’t buy pearls in moonshine on the long jetty.”

“Oh, no trouble about that, master,” he said. “Everybody in Broome buys ‘snide.’ You pay me bimeby all right.”

“No,” I said, “but don’t worry yourself. I don’t blab.”

He moved away shaking his head. Then five noisy shell-openers and the billiard marker from the “Spotted Deer” strode along the creaky planks towards us. They, too, were coming to fish. They baited and cast their lines. Within two minutes they and Da Silva and I all sang out together. Our lines had been dragged out of our hands. The water beneath us was lashed into spray and foam. An unusually large fiddler shark had hooked himself on Da Silva’s line and in his frenzied dash for liberty had fouled everyone else’s line too. They held him enmeshed, and we had the devil of a job playing him alongside to the foot of the lower jetty steps.

However, we landed him all right. Then one of the waggish shell-openers had a bright idea. He proposed that we run him on the pier trolley over the rails which lead to the town. In a jiffy we obeyed the crazy suggestion. . . . The only time I ever saw Jose in a temper was when he entered the billiard room after breakfast next morning and found the gasping fiddler oozing salt-sea slime and blood on the green cloth of his best table.

Jim, the handyman at the “Diver’s Rest,” was a big

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Barbados buck nigger who looked after the horses and buggies and did odd jobs about the place. He had roamed the world and spoke German Platt like a native of Hamburg. "*De Hamburger Fraun sin sehr schene,*" he would say, à propos of nothing in particular, to be followed up by some such remark as "*Ik schlaf gern mit weiss Frau.*"

In some parts of the United States a twist of Manila hemp would have been his lot for merely giving vent to such unseemly sentiments. I could never make up my mind whether he was a rogue or just an irresponsible child of nature. Probably he was both.

The paper twist he threw upon my bed one day when he brought the shaving-water contained an eight-grain round rosée pearl of exquisite lustre. I returned it to him after breakfast in the yard where he was grooming a big chestnut gelding, and said in an undertone: "Be careful, nigger, or you'll get yourself into trouble."

Whether he sought merely a new outlet for "snide" on behalf of his chums among the lugger crews or was in the pay of someone who wanted to set a trap for me, I never learnt. I took no chances.

The boss of the "Diver's Rest" was of a get-rich-quick disposition, a tough Swedish fo'c'sle man. This chap's stunts did not always come off as he planned, as the following will show.

One night when all were at supper a Koepang pearl-diver stood up against the bar-rail of the old "Rest" Hotel. While the landlord poured his drink this fellow brought out a magnificent drop-shape pearl of unusual size worth thousands of pounds. The saloon-keeper, overcome with greed at the sight of it, snatched it out of the man's hand and said: "This no belong you, you bloody monkey. I'll talk to your boss. Get out o' here or I call the police."

The diver, scared stiff, left his drink untouched and slunk away. Presently, when the bar-tender had relieved him, the Swede made haste to tell his wife and brother-in-law of his lucky catch. But that very night he was smoked out of his bed and his hotel was burnt to the ground. He and his family barely escaped with their lives. They had no time to save the horses or even to set free their screaming pet cockatoo, and the wonderful drop-shape pearl also perished in the flames.

“Such a pity,” said the simple-minded narrator from whom I heard the tale, “that the fire should a’ happened on this particular night.”

I went to the little cockney-Jew cobbler who had his shop in the shadow of the tin tabernacle. I had a pair of boots needing heeling.

“Just chuck them on to that heap in the corner, mister,” he said without looking up. Then he laid down the boot he was stitching. “You’re the new pearl-buyer, ain’t yer?”

“Yes,” I said. “Why?”

“’Cos I’ve a few bits of baroque. Maybe we can do a dicker.”

“Got a licence? You’re no pearler I guess!”

“Pearler? No—licence be damned! What for a licence? for six carat o’ ‘snide’? Bless you, mister, if you’re that pertikler you’ll do no trade here in Broome.”

“Sorry, Barney, that’s my own business. But let me tell you this! If you compete with me in the pearl-buying, I’ll set up here with a first-class boot-repair shop.”

No doubt Barney considered me an odd sort of a Jew trader, for he scratched his head and looked after me pityingly.

“A strange place, this Pearltown,” I thought. “Here

front of the police station and offer me some six or seven pieces of baroque. The lot could not have been worth more than three or four pounds. I was not interested and told him to get out. But the Corporal of Police who was sitting looking at us out of his open window now jumped up and swooped down upon us in the road.

Ah Sing dropped the piece of tissue paper in which the baroque was wrapped and took to his heels. The Corporal, followed by one of his men, gave chase, and Ah Sing was marched off to gaol. Next day he faced the magistrates and I was cited as witness. The trial lasted three hours and a quarter and although every one of the 120 or so Chinamen in town were at the courthouse, and all of them spoke pidgin English, not one of them could be made to utter anything more than "no savvy," although Ah Sing, who also spoke normally a tolerable pidgin, now demanded the services of an interpreter. The magistrate became so angry that he foamed at the mouth and his sentence of eighteen months sounded like "eighteen years." Ah Sing smiled and said: "Thank you, sir!" And on leaving the courthouse every John Chinaman talked pidgin English volubly.

But the Corporal was not satisfied. He summoned me too for looking at "snide," or something to that effect. I made light of this at first. Then I went to see a lawyer. I finished by engaging every fellow in town who had ever peeped into the statute book, so that the police should have the services of none. But although I wiped the floor with the Corporal the incident left a sting. Who had sent Ah Sing to me?

The place was becoming as unhealthy for me as the big boss buyer had prophesied. "Surely," I thought, "it must be easier to buy pearls in the Sahara than in Broome!"

However, I held on and redoubled my efforts. Each

morning as the sun rose I strode down to the long jetty and made my way thence to the tangled mangrove which hid the creek in order to tout amongst the pearlers newly come to port. They gave me scant encouragement. Tough chaps and rough they were, the Broome pearlers of those days—driftwood, dregs and spume. They distrusted me. In their jaundiced eyes this plausible fellow had only come to cheat them of their hard-earned prize. Yet every man jack amongst them with a pearl of price in his pocket was completely at sea as to its real worth. He neither knew what to ask for it nor when to close with an offer.

But this ignorance seemed to offer me a fair loophole. One morning I came amongst them armed with kindly malice. “ You mugs who know it all,” I said, “ you sweat and dive and fish and risk your lives every day in the week. And then when your fish is caught you don’t even know its market value ! ” And then I added a high-falutin jargon of “ explanation ” to puzzle them and fix their attention.

“ What are you gettin’ at, you bloody fool ? ” said a hefty Irishman through discoloured teeth.

“ Simply this. And you can’t deny it. Not a chap among you knows the value of a given piece of pearl. That’s how I can help you. I’ll undertake to value without fee for any of you chaps, and my valuation stands as an offer too. If none of the big bosses will give you more, then bring the stuff back to me and I’ll pay the price all right. If you have any sense, and any guts, you’ll know what to do ! ”

Well, there they stood, thinking hard and looking for the snag in my offer. But there was no snag, and at long last they realised it. That was a great day, when I put my first crimp into the men who had tried to run me out of town.

It was Syd Lang who really started the run. He was the

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chap whom Mac the steward had introduced to my notice as the man who stuffed his pocket with poetry books. Though to the eye he was a very plain fellow, the veriest prose in shabby binding, yet the nearness of the poets to his skin must somehow have given him compassion. He was always ready to help the underdog, if it did not cost him anything. Anyway, he was the first to try my remedy against the big bosses' game, and where he led, others followed, if for no other reason than this: he read the lessons at the tin tabernacle upon the sandy knoll of a Sunday.

CHAPTER V

"... BEGGARMAN, THIEF"

SOON after that I scored again. In Pearltown, as in other spots where Anglo-Saxons foregather, horse-racing was a favourite amusement. But being so remote a place, two days and once a year was all that Broome ever saw of that sport. Weeks before the racing, therefore, the only topics of conversation were form and weight and odds. You would have sworn that nothing in the world mattered more than a horse's fetlock or a jockey's crop.

It is usually wise to play when the rest of the world plays, but nevertheless there are times when it is wiser to set the general rule aside. I decided to work. And I told everybody who came my way that I should not be going racing, but that I might be found at my usual place in case of need. I repeated this interesting information so often that I had hopes of making it stick. On the morning of the first racing day I went to the bank and took out nearly all I had to my credit—two thousand pounds.

Ferguson the teller thought I had lost my head. "Are you going to take all this cash to the races?" he said disapprovingly. "Anyway, it is your own to do with as you choose," and shoved the wad across the counter.

I sat in my room at the "Diver's Rest" reading a book. The shouting from the race-course reached my ears. I guessed that the first race was over. Presently a chap came panting up the road straight to the house. Without uttering a word he placed a bunch of pearls on the table.

He was one of those who had had no use for me till

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now. So I offered him about half I should have given him the day before. He took it and fled. Others came in quick succession. The boss dealers were out of luck that day.

But next day, the greater the pity, I was not in the market, for all my ready cash was gone. So I sauntered down to the long jetty. The *Koombana* was in and moored at the far end of the pier.

She had come in on the flow, but now stood high and dry with the sandcrabs playing hide and seek around her keel. To me she looked like the Woolworth Building balanced on the edge of a plate. As I stood gazing at her, her master hailed me. I went aboard and we wetted the *Koombana's* head, for this was her first scheduled trip up the nor'-west coast since he had brought her out from the Clyde.

"Captain," I said, "her lines are fine, but for all that she don't look safe to me. Top-heavy I should say, if you were to ask me."

"And what does a landlubber like you know about ships?" he laughed. "Stow that talk and have another. Say when——"

Almost a year to the day I heard that she had been lost with all hands in a "willie-willie" on an upcoast trip some two days out of Broome. No one saw what happened, not a soul on board was saved, no wreckage was ever found. She just disappeared. Remembering her build, I am still sure in my mind that she had turned turtle.

That fearful hurricane tore a great hole in the Broome pearling fleet. It cost Pearltown four score of her best luggers and their crews. But by that time I had left Broome and the "Never Never Land" for good. For some time I had been fed up with the hopeless struggle against unfair odds,

the stench of rotting oysters, mosquitoes, sand flies, sun, white ants, spinifex, with the poor tucker, the dearth of greens and the lack of chums, and at last decided to quit in search of a better hole.

Do you wonder that Singapore, where my wandering star next took me, looked good after Broome? But here again misfortune overtook me. Soon after my arrival the dengue fever laid hold of me. For a full week I thought I was going to peg out. When I got over it, homesickness had its turn and instead of going to Ternate in the Dutch East Indies as I had planned, I took the first boat home.

That was luck, if you like! If I had not been longing for the sight of home I should have sailed in the steamer *La Seine* on her next trip to Ternate. And *La Seine* on that next trip came to grief. She collided with another vessel in a thick fog in the Straits of Rhio. Shark-infested waters those are, and the bloodcurdling tales told me by the three or four survivors I spoke to on the homeward trip made me shudder.

I had to break my voyage to meet my backers in Paris. And an odd incident befell me on my arrival there from Marseilles.

I needed a hat. I remembered a shop in the Rue Vivienne just off the Grands Boulevards, went there, made my selection and paid with a golden sovereign. The change coming to me was about seventeen francs, but instead of handing me this the proprietor courteously asked me to take a seat.

Just as I was growing impatient and was offering to return the hat unless my change were forthcoming at once, three men entered the shop. The assistant pointed to me, and the three newcomers invited me to follow them to the Commissaire de Police. After a long wait in a horribly

official ante-room I was taken before the Commissaire. A golden sovereign was shown me, and I was asked if I had many such. I said I had about a hundred.

Said the magistrate, "I appreciate your frankness, Monsieur ; it will make my task easier."

Said one of the three detectives, who were watching me narrowly : " We've nabbed you at last, you villain ! "

" *Taisez-vous,*" said the Commissaire, addressing his minion. " Am I or are you handling this affair ? "

" What am I accused of, Monsieur ? " I ventured in the midst of this domestic skirmish.

" Of sweating gold coins and passing them," he said sternly, and commanded, " Bring in the shopkeeper."

My mad hatter appeared in the doorway and gave me a venomous look. His statement was brief. He declared that on several occasions I had entered his shop and had each time purchased some small article for which I had tendered a gold sovereign. All these coins had afterwards proved to be under weight.

Fortunately I could prove that I had only arrived in Marseilles the previous night, and the endorsements on my passport showed that I had previously been away from Europe for more than eighteen months. Still the shopkeeper insisted that he had been done by an Englishman who resembled me. The Commissaire hesitated to let me go. Only after I had handed out several coins at random from the cache in my body-belt and had requested him to have them tested—which he did—was he satisfied ?

The apology I received was a handsome one. He told the wretched hatter that only a fool of a provincial shopkeeper could mistake an English gentleman for a low-down trickster and that the man who had cheated him was probably a fellow who hailed from his own village. At

this I laughed aloud, shook hands with the Commissaire, gathered up my gold and went out—a free man.

I called upon my financial backer to get an accounting from him. Remembering the quality of the stuff I had shipped to him I expected to have a nice little sum waiting for me. But the way he worked it out with a piece of chalk on his boy's school slate, I not only had nothing to get from him, but was in fact indebted to him to the tune of some three hundred odd pounds. From information I possessed I knew of the big profits he had made on everything I had shipped to him, but I was completely in his hands. I was sore at heart. But I paid up.

Then, as there was nothing more to keep me in Paris, I went to the Gare du Nord to catch my boat-train. At the station I told a porter to watch my traps for a while. When I came back both porter and traps had gone.

I entered the front door of my London home actually poorer than when, eighteen months before, I had set out in quest of a fortune.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLAMOROUS ISLES

BACK to " the Garden " I went once more, where nothing seemed to have changed—not even the position of the fragrant blooms which lined the kerbstones !

But a man cannot earn his living without the tools of his trade. It was therefore only natural that I should often lie awake during the long nights and think of luggers and divers and pearls. Every day that I spent in " the Garden " seemed to me mis-spent. I was straining at the leash.

Then one day a dealer in gems whom I had known for years agreed to back me for another venture. He and another friend of his were to come in with me. They had to find between them forty thousand pounds for the first year of trading, and I was to be free to choose my field of operations. Best of all, I was to sail the following week ; there were to be no vexatious delays.

Off again in search of a fortune ! I am an incurable optimist. This time I was sure I would seize and hold it, and as like as not have my meeting with that rogue Baer thrown in. I had not forgotten him.

Singapore again. I had not seen much of it on my first trip because of the fever from which I had been suffering, but now I explored every corner of the town. I was to know it more intimately still in after years. Scores of travellers have described it better than I could hope to do, but I may say this : that the place, its people, its life, presented a picture which had as potent a charm for me then as it has to-day.

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Again I met Leon the pearl-doctor, not in a swamp this time, but at a Kosher eating-house in a back street. He told me all his troubles. He too had tried to get a footing in Broome, and the big bosses had run him out of town. He told me of strange places he had been to since I pulled him and his wooden leg out of the bog at Onslow on the West Australian coast. I reminded him of his gratitude expressed in tomatoes, and said I had never forgotten them.

Then he mentioned islands which I could not find on my maps and tribes of which I had never heard the name. He said that these dim isles were a pearl-buyer's paradise. I asked him, naturally enough, why he wasted his time in Singapore when he possessed the knowledge of such a place. Smiling bitterly he replied, "Friend, a wooden leg is a great handicap in places where your life may depend on a sprint. There are plenty of pearls in those islands, sure, but as many cut-throats, juramentados and pirates."

"Have you ever been there?" I asked.

"I went there once with an ex-Navy diver on a small cargo steamer for the round trip. We never went ashore though, because of the tales we heard. We were scared stiff. A dead pearl-buyer has no use for pearls, and can't dicker for them once his head's cut off!"

I thought of the missus and the kids. I wanted to see them again.

"Then Leon," I said, half in earnest and half in jest, "by this bottle of Schnapps and these gefuellte fish, I implore you to tell me how to get there."

He thought for a while. "Well," he said, "you have a good pair of legs and the damned islands are anyhow no good to me. I make you a present of them and of its bloody savages too. The white pearlers in Broome were plenty savage for me."

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"Then tell me where I can find the gift you have made me?"

"Solo-Sumbungu," he said, "are the names of the islands, and Behn, Myer & Co., the shipping people, will tell you how to get there."

Poor Leon, he was a good sort, but a poor speller, and always mispronounced strange words. However, the shipping agents understood what I wanted and readily sold me a passage to "Solo-Sumbungu."

That was the last time Leon and I met. He eventually settled on Shark's Bay on the West Australian coast, became a boss buyer of pearl and shell, collected a sizeable fortune, was thrown one day from his horse in the bush and died there of thirst before he could be found.

The *Chow-Fa*, which carried me on this stage of my adventures, was owned by the North German Lloyd Steamship Company. She was just one of a number of unromantic but profitable freighters with restricted passenger accommodation which served as auxiliaries to the big German liners calling at Singapore. But her scheduled run sounded like adventure itself: through the China Sea, past the Sarawak and Brunei coasts to Labuan Island, thence to Jesselton, Kudat, Sandakan in British North Borneo; from there past the diminutive twin islands of Banguay to—at last—Jolo in the Mindoro Sea and Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines. Here was the "Solo-Sumbungu" of old Leon.

The names as I read them were thrilling enough, but the yarns I heard from the clerks at the shipping office and from other people left me no doubt that I should get plenty of excitement if I got nothing else. Eventually, as it turned out, I was not disappointed either way.

A fellow at Raffles Hotel told me that the *Chow-Fa's*

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skipper had the trade in pearls from these islands all in his own hands and advised me not to mention my business while on board. Otherwise, he hinted, I might find myself overboard in a shark-infested sea. "The skipper talks soft, he's a smoodger," he said. "But he will stand no interference with his business."

I paid for this advice with a bottle of fizz, but later when I knew the skipper of the *Chow-Fa* I realised that my leg had been pulled. A good fellow he was, tall, blond, blue-eyed, typically German and excellent company. As there was only one other passenger, we had many a long chat together. In the course of our talk he casually inquired after the object of my trip. I was not going to take undue risks, so I said I was a naturalist.

On the morning of the tenth day, as the sun rose out of the sea, we stood off Jolo, and as the rays dispelled the purple haze in which the island was shrouded, there broke upon us a gorgeous view. An enchanted isle it looked that day, a vision rising from the sea, and enchanted isle it still is to me, although it has been my home and the place of my labour for many years.

Though it was still so early, several good-sized praus with full-blown rust-red sails came out to meet us. Long before we had come to anchor a host of bamboo outriggered catamarans, manned by stark-naked bronze boys, swarmed round the ship's sides. From the smaller vintas came as a salute snatches of Samal song, interlarded with wild yells of welcome. Good-natured banter, headlong tumblings into the blue spray, and marvellous diving for coins which we threw down kept us amused for a long time.

We had three guests aboard for breakfast, Tiam Ting and two Malabar men, Ali and Maideen. Tiam Ting was a sleek Chinaman. He was dressed in flowered pink silk and

a smile that never came off. The two others were as black as pitch and wore cotton singlets and native sarongs. All three I found later were keen and shrewd merchants. They talked business to the skipper at table in Malay, but each of them spoke English too, of a kind.

Tiam Ting brought out a pearl of small walnut size, and the skipper as he ate his breakfast talked a price. The Chinaman merely smiled, and said, pointing to me: "This Ingres gentleman who cares nothing for pearls would also pay more than you, Master Capitan."

Meanwhile I sat still with my heart in my mouth. I knew that my partners at home could place that piece for five times the money the Chinaman asked. But while the skipper was dickering and had not turned it down, I dared not butt in. But the Captain was used to Chinese ways, and knew how to spin out a deal. He turned the pearl down, and went to his cabin for a box of cigars.

When he came back I had bought the gem. He changed colour when he heard the piece had changed hands. He gave me a look out of the corner of his eye and drawled: "A fine naturalist you are, because lying comes so natural to you. But I'll forgive you. Have a cigar."

CHAPTER VII

INTRODUCTION TO JOLO

It was a wonderfully strange island into which I had come, and my lot was now cast amongst a peculiar people. Although I had only come as a trader, I felt that as this was likely to be my home for a considerable time I ought to know something of its early history, its traditions and customs, and of recent happenings on the island. I was lucky enough to come by chance upon Dr. N. M. Saleeby's *History of Sulu*, from which I learned much of what I wanted to know.

"The original inhabitants of the island," he said, "were called Budanun, the 'hill people,' who were kin to the Dyaks of Borneo. The capital of these ancient Budanun was Mayunbung on the other side of the island. The first known rulers at Mayunbung were Raja Sipad the Older and his son or descendant Raja Sipad the Younger. In the days of the younger Sipad there appeared Tuan Mashaika, who was by some supposed to have issued from a bamboo stalk and was held by the people as a prophet. Tradition, however, states that he had human parents and that his father's name was Jamiyun Kulisa and his mother's Indira Suga, who both came to Sulu with Alexander the Great. The ancient religion of the people of Sulu was Hindu. The probability is that Raja Sipad's 'people of the hills,' the original inhabitants of the island, first fused with an invading people led by Tuan Mashaika, who came by way of Malacca and later on took in two further elements, the Tagimaha and Baklaya tribes, who settled on the Western Coast and on

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the stretch of land which is the present site of Jolo. These four tribes then form the Moro nation.

"In the fourteenth century the Samals also came. They were roving seamen—nomads of the ocean. Their numbers were exceedingly large and they settled in the island groups of Tawi-Tawi, Siasi, Pangutarang, Basilan, Zamboanga and on Sulu proper, wherever none contested their coming. But the newly arrived had not conquered nor were they absorbed. The relations were those of master and slave or ruler and ruled, and to this day the Samal is only a stranger in the land."

From time immemorial the Sulus were pirates. Their expeditions were extensive, and scarcely an island washed by the China Sea but knew their strength and feared their coming. Even the great Raja of Manila regularly sent hostages to Jolo. Piracy was in the people's blood, and like all Malaysians, they loved to rove the seas in their praus to attack towns and villages, kill those who resisted, make slaves of the free, and above all to pounce upon any well-freighted but ill-protected ship.

Piracy being second nature to the Malayan, these islands seemed made for his nefarious trade. The creeks, the shallows, headlands, rocks and reefs facilitated lurking surprise attacks and easy escapes and gave shelter in boisterous weather.

The coming of Islam to the island, followed by the Spanish incursion and then by the United States dominion, gradually wrought changes in this respect as in other things, but to the very day of my arrival piracy was rife in Jolo and persists there now.

The Sulus never exceeded 60,000 in number, but before the coming to the islands of Magellan their power was felt all over Luzon, the Visayan Islands, the Celebes Sea, North

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Borneo and the China Sea, and their trade extended from China to Japan at the one extreme and to Malacca, Sumatra and Java at the other.

The Spaniards came first in 1578. From then on, for a period of 300 years, it was war to the knife between the Spaniards and the Sulus—whom because of their dark skin the Spaniards called Moors or Moros, by which name they are still known. In 1638, the Spanish General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera arrived before Jolo with a fleet of 80 vessels carrying 600 Spanish soldiers, 1,000 native troops, volunteers and adventurers. For three months he laid siege to the town, and only because the Moros decided to withdraw to the neighbouring hills for their next stand could he take possession of the fortified town. A first permanent garrison of 200 Spaniards was established in Jolo. But the Moros remained masters of their beautiful island and of the numerous islands in the Mindoro Sea.

Throughout the years Sultan succeeded Sultan. There were cabals in plenty at their courts in Mayunbung, conspiracies and intrigues, depositions, slow murder and quick. But the common people toiled, prayed, begat children and laid themselves down to die. Intermittent strife between tribes and factions there was too, and the short bolo or the longer double-edged kris robbed wives of their breadwinner and children of their fathers.

Raja rule, Kuran law or Castilian threat made little difference to the hordes of pirates. They just carried on. Treaties were made ; but if the one side did not break them the other did. The Spaniards sent Armadas, patrolled the seas, fortified here and besieged there, killed and got killed, wore themselves out. Real masters of Sulu and Mindanao they never were.

The treaty of 1805 between Spain and Sulu laid down

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that no foreigners should be allowed to live in Sulu without the permission of the Spanish Government. But in 1848 Captain Henry Keppel and Sir James Brook came in the *Macander* to visit Jolo. Their report on what they saw is interesting.

"The town is built partly on land and partly on the sea. That on the land is called a 'citadel' and is strongly stockaded and flanked with batteries mounting heavy guns. The houses not within the stockade are built in Malay fashion on piles and are in rows or streets with a platform to walk upon between them about six feet wide.

"These rows of buildings extend into the sea for half a mile over a shoal which is nearly dry at low water. The population is numerous, mostly native fishermen and Chinese traders. The country in the neighbourhood of Jolo is highly cultivated, consisting with intervals of jungle, of pasture grounds and gardens very flourishing and pretty with abundance of cattle. . . .

"Next day was market day. The mountaineers came down in parties from six to twelve, mounted on well-formed little horses or oxen according to their rank and means; on these they sat with graceful ease, spear in hand; they were all well armed besides, with shield and kris; in some instances too we observed the heavy two-handed *kampilan*. They had a wild and independent bearing, and when seen in groups, some standing, some squatting, the women all chattering under the wide spreading tree, they much increased the interest of the already picturesque scene. . . ."

Spain evacuated Sulu in May, 1899. Jolo was garrisoned by American troops on the same day, and on August 29th, General Bates concluded a treaty with Sultan Jamalal

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Kiram II., and the sovereignty of Sulu passed from Spain to the United States of America.

* * * *

The commanding officer at Jolo when I came to the island was Colonel Swift. He had a charming wife and three equally charming daughters. The Governor, Weed, was a bit of a brute and drank hard. The Municipal Presidente or Mayor of the town was a Filipino who was full of his own importance, while the principal Chinese residents, who under the Spanish *régime* had been appointed headmen over their fellows and had received the title of Capitan, were Tiana, Tandico and Oya. They were strictly traders and minded their own business.

Jamalal Kiram II. was Sultan still. His Prime Minister was Hadji Butu. Amongst the important Moros I remember the names of Hadji Tahil, Hadji Ousman, Datu Tahil, Datu Indanan, besides other Datus and Panglimas or headmen.

As soon as I had taken up my quarters in a room above Pedro Delgado's saloon I made a few preliminary inquiries. I found that prospects looked very good indeed, and quickly I made up my mind to establish myself in the place.

I therefore called upon the Civil Governor, and he asked me a few questions that were hardly relevant. He also expressed the hope that I would do an abundant trade before my head was chopped off by an amok-runner. Not very encouraging to a newcomer, but I dare say he meant well.

The commanding officer, Colonel Swift, was amiable. I never spoke to him again, however, because the army folk thought themselves vastly superior to anything in trade. His wife and daughters I admired from afar. All we had in common once a day were the ripples and spray in the lagoon where I went to bathe.

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The Chief of Customs saw me twice, once when I left my visiting card and again when he issued my permit to carry firearms.

Until they learned that I had come to stay, the Chino Capitans were friendly. There was no other white man in trade in Jolo, and my advent no doubt caused them some misgivings even at that early date. However, I was a fixture and they would have to make the best of it.

On the first Sunday, after church, I called upon the Municipal Presidente. He knew I was coming, and surrounded by his family and friends he received me with the studied courtesy which was a remnant of the lesson he had learned from the Castilians. Manila bottled beer was served to me on a silver salver and also sweet cakes. The heirlooms, curios and knick-knacks gathered by him and his forbears for decades were all set out for me to see and handle. Unacquainted with the custom of the place I admired—and was told they were mine for the taking. But the American who had introduced me whispered what would happen if I took the gift too literally. I admired no more after that.

I had requested that I might be allowed to pay my respects to the Sultan. That very Sunday his secretary, who was blind in one eye and squinted with the other, brought me word that I was to be at the palace on the following morning.

"What time?" I asked.

Oh, that didn't matter, he replied, so long as I didn't come when Jamalal Kiram II. was in his bath. I gave him a gold piece to cement our friendship and he threw it back on the table—to see that it rang true!

On Monday I shaved with a new blade and put on my best clothes. It was not every day that I visited Majesty. I was already on my way to the palace when I remembered

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that I was taking no gift with which I could establish myself in the good graces of His Highness, who, by the way, I had learnt was not only himself owner of a pearling fleet, but also received regular tribute in pearls from the Moro and Samal divers. In fact Sulu law laid it down that all pearls fished by any native must first be offered for purchase to the Sultan.

But what had I to give that was worthy of so potent a monarch? I thought hard. None of the curios I had gathered on my way out, in places like Port Said, Colombo and Singapore, was at all suitable. Yet I could not go with empty hands. Then I remembered that before leaving Paris I had paid a visit to Mofsho, a Russian gem merchant, who had tried all ways to sell me some of his toys.

"If you are going to the East," he said, "I have the very thing for you. It will make a grand present for a rajah."

"I'll meet no rajahs or princes," I said, "and I am a trader. I am going out to get and not to give."

But he had taken no notice of my words and had opened a drawer. Then on the table he had laid a dark green translucent stone, the size of a small hen's egg.

"Is it glass?" I said, knowing well what it was.

"No," he replied, "not glass, but a semi-precious stone called obsidian. I bought it at the Hotel de Ventres cheap. Now how much shall we say? Make an offer. It will come in handy, and it will surely bring you luck."

"Still it is glass!" I said. "It is a kind of volcanic glass, and the Aztecs used to make knives of the stuff. There must be loads of it about. But still, as we are friends, I'll give you a louis for this."

"A louis only?" he demanded. "Well, take the damned thing. I'm sick of it. But I hope it will make a hole in the

bottom of your ship and you'll get drowned for paying me such a measly price."

Precisely this "gem" I remembered now as I walked back to my rooms. I dug it out from the bottom of my trunk and had a look at it. It was a pretty thing. I laid it on a thick layer of snowy cotton wool in a handsome box and set out again.

The Sultan's palace lay outside the citadel. I had to pass through the guard-house arch where an American lieutenant and his men kept watch. Here I was stopped. Said the officer :

"I'm sorry, but you can't go out. There must be two of you and you must be armed. These are the standing orders."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "I have no body-guard and I never carry firearms. I have a gun at the hotel, but I shouldn't know which side the bullets go in and where they come out."

The officer laughed. Being good-natured, he spoke to two armed soldiers who were just then going through the gate to buy fish for their wives in Tulay market. They stood to attention while he ordered: "Accompany this man to the Sultan's house." Then turning to me he said, "Remember, the Murrican Army can't be held responsible if a lime-juicer walks back through this gate with his bean tucked under his armpit."

The road to the palace took me past the Tulay marketplace. Here were gathered together a large crowd of buyers and sellers: Moros from the hills, some mounted on shaggy ponies, others on carabaos (mud buffaloes) with baskets of rattan slung from their saddle-horns containing the goods brought to market—copra, almacica, gutta percha, abacca, camotes, tapioca, plantains, vanilla pods; and the poorer

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hill-folk who trooped in in close single file, balancing heavily laden bamboo poles on their wealed shoulders and with their wives trotting contentedly behind them. Well might a woman be contented, for as soon as her man had sold his wares to the Chino traders he would trade for a Neapolitan coral ornament for her hair, for a Brummagenn filigree silver bangle or two, for a German celluloid comb and a few yards of calico.

There were Samal fishermen straight from their vintas or praus with such fish as they had caught over-night and such clawed horrors as I had only seen in nightmares. The air was laden with the smell of ill-dried copra, the acrid odour of putrid fish, the stink of vegetables in the first stages of decay, and, above all, with the pervading stench of the delicious Durian. I should have loved to linger awhile in spite of the stench, but I remembered that Royalty was waiting for me.

I thanked my military escort, wiped the flies from my sweating face and strode alone across to the palace.

CHAPTER VIII

VISITING ROYALTY

THE palace was only a wooden house and the roof of it had come from a Welsh rolling-mill. Some latticed windows gave on to the street, others on to a yard. The palace gate was a fairly wide door and the sentry a toothless old betel-chewing Moro hag.

I asked her in English where the Sultan hung out, and she replied in Moro the equivalent of "kanitverstan." So, as there was only one staircase that I could see, I noisily clattered up the wooden stairs to give notice of my coming. Since I could not speak their language, I hoped devoutly that there would be no watchdogs around; but then I remembered that Moslems have no truck with dogs and felt happier.

I knocked at the first door that faced me. It was opened by a Moro who had watched my approach. He led me through a corridor into a very spacious sunny room, and there, on a high-backed throne of peacock-coloured straw, sat Sultan Jamalal Kiram II.

Of very short stature, the Sultan looked even less imposing than usual when seated in the huge chair which almost entirely engulfed him. He was much lighter of hue than any Moro I had so far met. There was not a trace of a beard on his not too prepossessing face. He had a cast in one eye which gave him a rather forbidding appearance. His bearing was that of a man who is accustomed from youth to be flattered and obeyed, but there was that in his face which showed that he had known disappointments

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and tribulations. He was simply dressed in a Chinese-cut loose-fitting suit of pongee with five-dollar gold pieces for buttons on the coat, and his head was covered with a black velvet pill-box hat of a kind much affected by the Moro nobility.

I simply said as I entered, "How d'ye do?" to which he replied, "Salaam alaikum." How really stupid of me. I should have salaamed instead of howdedoing. He held out his small brown hand, however, which I took. This, by the way, was the only thing he ever gave me. Then he motioned me to a seat by his side, but I remained standing, having once read in a book that it wasn't good form to sit in the presence of royalty. I balanced on one foot, scratching my calf with the other, because the royal mosquitoes in that room were as bloodthirsty as their vulgar sisters outside. Only at his second bidding would I sit down on the edge of a Tecona Grande chair, but I hadn't a word to say, for he had no English and I no Moro.

Two servants brought in food on lacquered trays—slices of pawpaw cooled with ayer batu, snowy mangostans peeping out of their russet half-shells, tangerines in sections and almond cakes. On another tray were slender-stemmed glasses such as we use for champagne, but the three jugs containing the liquor were filled to the brim, the first with San Miguel Cerveza—that is, Manila-brewed beer, the second with Bear-brand leche, and the third with coconut water: something to suit every taste, as it were.

Just then Hadji Butu, the Sultan's chief adviser came into the room. He wore dark trousers, a white coat of military cut and a red fez on his head. He also had a cast in his right eye—or was it a star? In his hand he carried the inevitable betel-nut box. He spoke English perfectly, said, "How you?" and went straight for the trays.

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I partook of the refreshment in my turn, and when the prime minister asked me what I would drink I voted for coconut water. This gave him occasion to make conversation, and he explained that in his view no man who loved his wife—or for that matter anyone else's wife—ought to drink the vile stuff. I suppose he meant that coconut water was not good for the monkey glands.

He filled his own glass with Bear-brand milk, and asked me to tell him, since I was such a travelled man, where all the bear-cows came from. I said I did not know, and he translated my reply to the Sultan who seemed very pleased to think that I was no wiser than his chief counsellor.

Hadji Butu next asked me had I come straight out of England, and when I said "yes"—"Was the King of England in good health and also his Queen?" I assured him they were perfectly fit when I left them, and to escape further intimate questions I now presented the box containing my gift to the Sultan.

His Highness thought he had never seen anything like it, and asked me how much it was worth. I diplomatically replied that now he had touched it it was priceless. My answer so pleased him that he said with a gracious smile, "Come again when I have some pearls to sell—that is, if you can pay more than the Chinos."

I guessed that the audience was now at an end and bowed myself out of the room.

Jamalal Kiram II. was himself a travelled man. When the United States Government took over from the Spaniards it had in its wisdom decided to treat the Sultan to a round trip through Europe and America, the idea being that if he saw with his own eyes the marvels of civilisation he would do everything in his power to assist in the developing of the islands.

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Well, he made the trip with a large retinue. On his return the Governor of Mindanao and Sulu, who came in state to meet him, asked which were the things in Europe and America that had most impressed His Highness. He replied, "Three things : in Paris, the exceeding friendliness of the ladies on the Boulevards ; in London, the water-closets ; and in New York, everybody's gold teeth.

On this same day I also saw for the first time General Pershing, at this period Governor of the Mindanao and Sulu Province. I was standing on the causeway leading to the pier with the skipper of one of the inter-island boats when he came towards us and began speaking to the other man whom he knew. I had plenty of opportunity of observing this future commander of great armies. He was tall, of a commanding appearance, and bore himself well, but struck me then, as afterwards, as a man of singularly overbearing and not too kindly disposition. Well—he had his hands full at the time. There was plenty of reason why he should look so grim.

But who would have dared to predict then that "Black Jack," as his men called him, would one day head the United States Army in a world war on European soil ?

The American who had told me the yarn about the Sultan's powers of observation and comparison was a devoted admirer of Pershing's, who in turn had a sneaking fondness, I believe, for this quaint original, who went by the name of Dicky Gibbs ; for towards the end of his Mindanao-Sulu administration the General appointed Gibbs Municipal Presidente of Jolo, to the amazement of every native and the disgust of all the Chinos.

Gibbs had a great fund of yarns and told them well in his own way—Nebraska or Nevada style, or was it Arkansas ? Some of them, I am sure, were true—others—

well, since he firmly believed them to have happened, they were in a sense true too. He was a unique specimen. He came to the Philippine Islands with the first United States Army of Occupation, and fought against Aguinaldo, the schoolmaster-patriot, in the guerilla war among the rugged hills and rice marshes of Luzon.

When he "checked in" (his way of expressing honourable discharge from the Army) he was at a loose end. But a fellow must live, and as Dicky ever loved the spectacular way of doing things, he talked someone into building him a big balloon. He himself was to go up in it and give the Manila folk the novel treat of witnessing a parachute descent. He went up in the balloon all right, although he had never been in the air before, but there was a hitch in the second part of the proceedings. The parachute obstinately refused to open out, and Dick came down in a hurry, hurtling through the air like a meteor. The gaping, gasping Chino-Filipino crowd fell over itself to avoid the hero of that stunt. When Dicky Gibbs stood on his feet again his hair was white as snow. And that, he said, was how he started in business.

Why and how he had drifted southwards to the Moro Isles no one knew. But it is certain that he came and that he remained for four and twenty years. Pershing was then a young captain chasing the Moros in the open and fighting them in their cottas in Mindanao and Sulu. Dicky saw most of the fighting during those years, more or less in the capacity of spectator. He was engaged in the pack-train, a crowd of the toughest hombres you could imagine. The pack-train was not of the Army, but the Army was helpless without the pack-train, on which it depended for its supplies. It could neither shoot nor eat save by leave of the pack-train, and the pack-train men on their mules saw and heard

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all that was going on ; but they only practised shooting from the hip to qualify for Hollywood. A fine life ! The chow was fine, the pay good, blowing up Moros with dynamite the finest sport in the world.

The worst of it, for the regulars, though, was that this was not an official war. Nor was the killing official—there was no honour in it. One day everything would apparently be calm and peaceful, the next each mountain valley would be buzzing like an angry hive. The Moro never looked far for a quarrel. He would fight for anything—or nothing. Sometimes he thought the half-moon was a better design than the stars and stripes, sometimes he thought that his bolos and krisses were going rusty for want of blood, sometimes he took personal offence that the Americanos' favourite dish was pork and beans. Sometimes it was merely freedom he wanted—freedom to do unto others as he saw fit.

CHAPTER IX
"TOUGH GUYS"

I HAD now been on the island for quite four days, and with the exception of my visit to the Sultan I had not strayed far from the city walls. I had been repeatedly assured that not only was it not safe to stir beyond the city gates, but that even in the streets of Jolo you might suddenly find yourself faced with a fanatical Moro determined to carve you up with his 3-foot bolo or kris ground to a razor-edge.

The motives underlying such not infrequent happenings were either misguided patriotism, religious fanaticism or simply a desire to be done with life. The Moro, being a Mahomedan of sorts, must on no account take his own life without the direst consequences in the life hereafter. He has therefore to resort to the killing of others in order to get killed himself. I have never once heard in all my residence among Malaysians of a case of suicide as suicide is understood in the West.

The Malayan in a religious frenzy or in great personal trouble seizes the nearest weapon, runs out into the street and starts slashing to right and left at everyone he meets. If unopposed he usually makes for the market-place in order to get as many heads as he can before he himself is killed. He has not long to wait. For his fellows have speedily armed themselves with stout hardwood cudgels from the stacks which are conveniently distributed in every Malayan community against such an emergency, and they just pulp him to death. Then they return stoically to

their work, and say pityingly, “He was only a poor amok.”

In Jolo the amoks are called Juramentados—a memory of Spanish days. The very word used to send a shiver down my spine. The townsfolk, for some reason or other—maybe because of their circumscribed existence—took a macabre delight in discussing the subject on every occasion and used to bring out their photographs of amoks decapitated, amoks riddled with bullets, amoks minus arms or legs, amoks with trailing guts, sabre-slashed and in every state of maimed horror.

The Jolo folk, civilian and military, gloated over these pictures and recalled for the benefit of every newcomer the minutest details connected with Juramentados of the past while implying that you yourself might participate in a gruesome episode within the next few hours. The tales, I found, were even more horrifying and unnerving than the horrible reality !

Within the precincts of the citadel one was comparatively safe because the guards at the city gates made every Moro leave his weapons behind until he returned from his business in the town. Frequently it happened, however, that intending amoks concealed their bolos in their pants or had them strapped to their back beneath their jacket, or else brought them in baskets covered by vegetables and fruit. So one never knew.

The first warning you received was the shriek “Juramentado !” from a neighbouring street. This was echoed from hundreds of throats and all those in the vicinity of the first shout ran—not towards but away from the noise, and as people ran in all directions every shop-keeper and every householder immediately banged his front door and waited shivering behind it. God help the

pedestrian who was thus shut out in the blank street, for no one would let him in. What he then saw, if in his panic he had wits enough left to look, was this: death in the guise of primitive humanity, with a distorted face, fierce passion in every line, bloodshot savage eyes, and the cruel glistening blade held high; death dancing down the street in a dreamily swaying, leaping, madly onrushing dance.

The sum and substance of Jolo, the world's smallest walled city, was this—all contained within some few hundred paces from east to west and north to south: the barracks, the United States custom house, the Spanish-built barracks of yore, a diminutive plaza with seats in the shade of gorgeous flame trees, the Chinese godowns and the Chinese shops, the tin-roofed weatherboard moving-picture house, Don Pedro Delgado's beer saloon with some rooms for boarders above, the Catholic Church, solidly built of rubble and stone, and a street or two of carefully shuttered Filipino houses and the military hospital. The roads were not too narrow and were bravely paved with Green Island cement, upon which all day in the heat the languorous carabaos would deposit their visiting cards with a resounding slap.

One more item that should not be left out were the two graceful coconut palms flanking the stone sentry-boxes at the sea entrance to the town. Everyone who came to Jolo went away with a photograph of them!

Multum in parvo indeed. But bless you, we were not cramped, not even when the whole garrison, officers and men, the Chino-Filipino population and a score of white civilians foregathered in the streets. This happened twice daily—when the movie show started and again when it left off.

There were 4,000 United States Cavalry in Jolo, half of

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the number that had been there when the Moros still thoroughly enjoyed the fighting, and the pack-train, which I have already mentioned. The United States Regulars were no worse than any other regulars, but the pack-train boys were the last word in toughness. The gentlest of them thought nothing of blowing up a Moro kampong with a few sticks of Noble. It was mixed company; Swedes, Greeks, Danes, a few Russians, Poles and Croats—the scrapings and dregs of the labour market. The lingo they slung at you between the squirts of tobacco juice was back-block Murrigan with a Czecho-Slovak brogue and a twang invented by Jansen the Dane. They never cursed or swore but once a day—from sunrise to sunset.

However, Pedro Delgado in his saloon could handle them as well as he handled the United States Cavalry. I'll lay ten to one that he got seven-eighths of their pay in exchange for San Miguel Cerveza. The other eighth went to Chino Charlie round the corner, whose chop suey had won the heart of the Army. Charlie also sklammelled yeggs and flied them to suit individual taste. A great man was Chino Charlie, though of small build, and as wise as they make them in Amoy.

But after all the man who ran the beer saloon made the real big money. Good luck to you, Don Pedro! You gave me a room and a slice of porch above your saloon for 250 pesos a month, and the right to sit at your mess. I liked your garbanzas well enough till the *Encyclopædia Britannica* told me they were but a kind of dry pea. But it shocked me to find you were a man of so little gastronomical taste as to serve them up with carabao tail. But good taste or no, Don Pedro, I have not forgotten you, or your many sneak-thief kindly deeds to me and others.

Two days after I'd settled down in my room above the

saloon it was Army pay-day. I had set me down after supper on the porch to rest in a Kudat chair and dream of home. From below came the beery song from a half-boozed pair, the sound of many men talking, the clink of glasses, the scraping of chairs and the constant ring of the cash register.

But suddenly louder words followed, followed by curses and shouts, and the report of a gun. The sound made me jump from my chair, and there, only a foot from me, lay the bullet.

In my funk I did not hear the second shot, but a minute later, leaning over my porch rail, I saw the stretcher below in the street, a pallid face in the moonlight and (in my mind's eye) a weeping American mother.

"Does this sort of thing go on all the time?" I inquired of Don Pedro.

"Oh, bless you, Senor, it only lasts while the men have any money—three or four more days at most, for by then their wads will be in my iron chest."

Three or four days might be too much for me, I thought, and was ready to seize the opportunity of getting away from Jolo for a week, when the skipper of the Government launch invited me to take a trip with him to Zamboanga in Mindanao.

"Just get on board quietly to-morrow night at eight," he said, "because the Governor may take it into his head to come along too."

I did as I was told. But scarcely had I stepped unobtrusively aboard on the morrow when within five minutes from sailing time the Governor himself also stepped on board. He was the worse for liquor and in a nasty mood. I heard him shout to the skipper, "How much beer have you got on board?"

"Four cases, sir," the skipper replied.

"I hope it will last till the morning," hiccuped the Governor. Then he gave orders to cast off, but just as we were sheering away he happened, as bad luck would have it, to spy me sitting quietly in the shadows. "Damn you," he shouted at me, "what the hell are you doing on this Government launch?"

I tried my best to explain; but he was furious and told me to jump while there was time or he'd throw me overboard. He seemed quite ready to suit the action to the word, so I grabbed my bag and leapt. I landed within a fraction of an inch of the edge of the pier. And so ended my first excursion out of Jolo.

After that the Gubernador and I were not friends. He eventually got moved as "temperamentally unsuited" to his high office. And some time after that, I heard, he bestrode a nag one day that was equally temperamental. It threw him as he had threatened to throw me, and he broke his neck.

Perhaps it was just as well that I should truckle down to the work in hand and not go gadding about seeing sights. I called on the Chino merchants, for I had been given to understand that all trade was in their hands, but as I had fared in Broome so I fared here; only the Chinos were whiter men. They explained to me that they could not trade with me as they were under obligation to the big Chinese firms who were their correspondents in such centres as Singapore, Manila, Hongkong, Shanghai and Amoy.

This first refusal did not worry or discourage me, but after several vain attempts I came to the conclusion that I had little to hope from that quarter. I then thought of approaching the natives themselves. But here, too, I met with obstacles not to be overcome in days or weeks or

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months. There was in the first place the language difficulty. But a more formidable handicap was the fact that the Moros and Samals were frequently connected by marriage ties with the Chinese traders. The Chinaman when he settles down in a place, even though he may have one or more wives somewhere in China, invariably takes unto himself one at least of the daughters of the land he settles in. These may be, and for the most part are, drawn from among the poorest class, to whom such plain home comforts as their Chino husbands may afford them is undreamt-of luxury. The Chinaman is a considerate husband too, and a good father, and he in turn is amply repaid by the hold he gets on the trade of the country through his womenfolk.

But although I was keen on trade, I was not prepared to go to the length of establishing blood-ties in Moroland. My prospects seemed distinctly poor. I had a third difficulty in that the natives were much given to barter. This suited the astute Chinaman, who much preferred bartering the commodities displayed in his store against the products the natives brought him. Natives would spend hours in establishing what they were to receive for their copra, abacca, gum almacica, gutta-percha, beeswax, *bêche-de-mer*, pearl shell, pearls and what not, and also what they themselves were to allow for the palay (unhusked rice), tinned salmon, sardines or the few yards of bleached or unbleached calico they had selected. The deal was generally concluded by their springing a surprise on the Chino by demanding so much silver to boot. The satisfaction was mutual when the Chino handed over some clinking, old-fashioned pesos of Spanish antecedent. The Moros preferred them to the American pesos with the American eagle because they were bigger coins, and the Chino found this preference of

advantage to himself since the intrinsic silver value of the Spanish peso was 20 per cent. less.

But I, alas, had no shop, no selection of trade goods, no use and no outlet for the miscellaneous products the Moros had to offer in exchange. I also had no hoard of illegal Spanish silver pesos. Above all, I had not the infinite patience which the Chinese trader possesses in such extraordinary degree. I could not have spent hours over a deal involving the profit of a half-cupful of rice.

I therefore seemed beaten all along the line so far as the native and Chino trade was concerned. However, there was yet another class of men with whom I might trade if my advances should find favour in their eyes : the Japanese and Filipino owners of the pearling luggers. There were some twenty odd pearling boats then, fitted with proper diving gear, whose home port was Jolo. To them at last I appealed, but they too traded with the Chino, and they were for the most part indebted to him.

Things looked more and more gloomy. I cudgelled my brains. How ever was I to get into the game ?

Whenever Don Pedro Delgado, my saloon-keeping landlord, felt that he was getting the least bit drunk, he sought refuge on the bit of porch he rented to me because he knew that his henpecking wife dared not follow him on to so sacred a ground. There he stretched himself lengthwise in my best Kudat chair, gave me one of his black Manila cheroots, stuck another into his own mouth, and with half-closed eyes criticised my methods of attack, advised and prophesied.

If Don Pedro could write at all he could just pen his name, but he was a master of strategy. On one occasion, I remember, he was so disgusted with my slowness that he actually brought me a native who had a handful of the most

exquisite pearls for sale. He must have sent for him from a distant island in a vinta at his own expense. I was so unprepared for such a sight and the magnitude of the deal that I had not a quarter of the money I thought I should need on the spot. My nearest bank was in Singapore. For that reason I hesitated to make the kind of offer which might have clinched the deal immediately. Pedro was befuddled and snoring in my chair, but he half-opened his eyes and made the offer for me. When finally the Moro accepted, knowing he could get no more, Pedro, drunk as he was, got up, went into his office and returned staggering under the load of huge bundles of peso notes. I believe it took the Moro nearly the rest of the day to count them, and he was not satisfied then, but insisted on a gift of ten packets of Isabella cigarettes. When it was all settled I said to Pedro :

"Where do you come in on this deal? What is your share of profit to be—and of course you'll hold the pearls until I can repay you what you've laid out."

His reply was characteristic of the man.

"Know you, Señor," he said, "that I'm in the liquor trade, and meddle not with things I don't understand. Every man to his own. As for the money, why, you'll pay me when you can, and if you don't you will not have been the first man to let me down."

Dear old Pedro ! If only he had once varied the garbanzas at his mess with green garden peas I should have set him a fine black marble headstone in the Catholic Cemeterio at Manila where now he takes his last rest.

Dicky Gibbs felt that way too. He also was an honoured guest at Pedro's mess for 150 bucks a month. At this time he was making a precarious living out of his photographic studio which he had set up mainly because he had won a

good camera in a game of bluff. He revolved in his head many a scheme for getting rich. And incidentally he gave me a tip which proved of considerable value to me.

One day he came to me and said, "From Surigao to the north of Mindanao and to Basilan Island, all through the Sulu Archipelago, the sea-bottom is lousy with pearl shells. If there's one island there are a hundred from which the natives go out in their open vintas to dredge or dive for them. These are the fellows you want, but you've got to get hold of them first. But it wouldn't be kinder safe for you to go up there in an open vinta or to carry any dough with you. To write them each a nice circular letter, on the other hand, would be no bloody use."

"I had gathered as much," said I ironically.

"Wait a moment," he continued. "Now it kinder struck me that if you got yourself photographed alongside a big bug like the Sultan and sitting at a table with lots of pearls spread out before you and a pair of scales in your hand, with a stack of coin and a big wad of banknotes on one side, making it look as if you was shoving the lot across to that big stiff of a Sultan, it would be a grand advertisement. They can all understand picture language, and they'll know what you look like if they want you."

"The idea's all right," I admitted, "but how am I going to get the pictures to these folk?"

"Leave that to me, old chap," he said. "You just give me the order for five thousand good sized pictures—not less than five thousand, you understand, and I'll get them where they ought to do you the most good. But I don't want you to buy a pig in a poke, so I'll let you in on something. When the Government men go out to collect the head-tax they'll each be tickled to take along a batch of these photos because as like as not they will peddle them for a piece of

money and every Moro will want to have the pretty picture with his Sultan in it."

I gave him the order on the spot.

Jamalal Kiram II. was "sure tickled to death" to be in the picture, for Dicky told him that it was meant for the White House and the British Court.

Within three weeks the advertisement told, and it kept telling for years. I think I owe it to Dicky Gibbs, therefore, to introduce him to you as he appeared at the time. He was above middle height, sparely built, big-boned with a clean-shaven, sun-parched face; jaws and chin not of too much consequence, eyes blue-grey with a twinkle in them, hair snowy-white, the result of that unfortunate Manila parachute descent of his. But his garb was most splendid. No tailor's cutter could have designed a costume more exquisite. It was a mufti-uniform, half civilian, half United States Army style, wrought of white twilled duck which clung to his shape as closely as if he had been poured into it. With this he wore white buckskin bluchers, reaching almost to his thighs, a cowboy sombrero of the most generous size, set at an acute angle, while from his belt swung an army gun, carried in such a way that every bad hombre in town or on the trail saw in it a deadly challenge. Such was my publicity agent.

To Pedro's mess there came many others, fixtures in the place or merely drifters. I remember Cole, the Governor's secretary, a raw youth straight from an Illinois college, ginger-haired, with the stomach of an ostrich and always ready to guffaw at anything that was said; Sonson, the sub-collector of customs, a collector of fighting-cocks too and a great authority on the finer points of the cruel senseless sport; Hasmere, ex-lieutenant of constabulary now lending his name and his brains to a Chink-financed lumber

concern, who had a fine practical taste for good books and a theoretical taste for French cooking ; Sutrisso, the Chino-Filipino mestizo, Justice of the Peace, a little yellow-faced rat of a man, in stature the exact length of the words “JUEZ DEL PAZ.” He held his head to one side so that it should not obstruct his view, and flapped his ears out of sheer delight whenever they brought him a case to try.

These and myself were the permanent messers, but every now and then a steamship or launch would bring us the welcome diversion of strangers. One day I found the seat next to mine at table occupied by a benevolent-looking middle-aged man. He spoke with subdued voice and kindly manner of men and topical matters, and ate with a hearty appetite, but I particularly noticed that he lifted a fly most tenderly out of his glass to save it from drowning.

When he had left the table I said to Don Pedro, “Now, present company excepted, Señor, this was the most courtly gentleman I’ve met since coming to this island. I wonder who he might be?”

“I can put you wise to that,” said Pedro as he helped himself to a glass of tinto. “He’s the chief Americano hangman and travels from island to island wherever there’s a hanging to do. He’s good at this work, they say, because he’s got such sensitive fingers.”

“Yes,” chimed in a newcomer whom I had not seen before, “if ever the Gubernador orders the abacca rope for me I would have none but that chap to arrange the hemp cravat for me.” He said this so earnestly, running his hand over his scraggy neck and his close-cropped head that I laughed aloud.

Thus was I introduced to Charlie Schuck, the shortest and slickest of the four brothers of that name. These brothers require a page to themselves. They were a part

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and parcel of the island. Father Schuck, who had been dead some years, originally came from Hamburg. Although not of sea-faring stock, he had given his old father no peace until he had fitted him out with a well-found schooner. From the mouth of the Elbe to the Mindoro Sea was a long jump in those early windjammer days. He set out with an ailing wife and four romping boys ; but he arrived without the wife.

The Sultan of Sulu of those days found his trade goods quite to his liking and therefore bade him make his home in the island. He also picked him a buxom Moro girl to mother the orphaned boys. Within a short time Schuck the elder had acquired, in one way or another, a great holding of land ; and what with the status of a substantial landlord, the prestige conferred by his white skin and his natural shrewdness, he soon became a power in the island.

His four sons grew into manhood, took native wives and dissipated much of the substance the old man had won so hardly. Then came the change over from the Spanish to the American *régime*. The Americanos thought they could make use of these whiteskins, who knew the land as intimately as any native. But the eldest son caught black-water fever on a visit to North Borneo before the United States Government could give him a job ; the second was a decent chap, well-intentioned towards the new masters, but he made a good interpreter, no more. Charlie was the third son. Of him I saw a good deal later. We had considerable business dealings together, but he was a regular twister. He wasn't much to look at, just a wiry whisp of a man with a great beaky nose and a guttural German accent. He had a bad limp, and the story at the barracks went that once when the Moros rose in revolt and went up into the hills, Charlie Schuck, in his capacity of guide to the United

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States troops, led them into an ambush. Whether that was so or not no one ever knew, but the boys who suspected him shot from the hip, and Charlie limped ever after. The fourth lad—Willie—was, and maybe still is, a thundering ass. There was yet a fifth son by a native mother. My friend Julius had all the faults of the Moro and none of the virtues of the white man. I often warned him throughout the years that he would come to a bad end, and so he did, for later on they condemned him to sit in the Philippine Senate. He richly deserved his fate.

CHAPTER X

SENSITIVE PLANTS

JUST as I was beginning to reap the reward of my pictorial advertising campaign, Gekira the pirate broke loose again. He had been resting for a while in some cave or some inaccessible rock-eyrie overlooking the Mindoro Sea. But now he was getting short of rice, or perhaps he had tired of his latest wife. He began his old tricks once more, chasing fishing vintas or praus laden with trade goods, seizing what he could use and burning the rest. He even played the deuce with small American craft.

These exploits put the islands into a state of ferment. The Samals were frightened out of their wits and the Moro mothers would threaten their naughty brats with tales of his ferocity. And the English in Northern Borneo as well as the American Army and Navy realised they would have to get Gekira before there could be safety again in those waters.

It is said that a million rounds of ammunition were used in this man-hunt. No pearling lugger dared go out to the grounds; the oysters rejoiced, but the women of the coast mourned for their men. I mourned for the pearls which did not come my way, and often pondered in the night what Leon the pearl-doctor had said—that two legs were better than one in this part of the world.

But everything comes to an end, and Gekira, having slighted his paramour, a whisp of a nut-brown maid taken on one of his expeditions, was betrayed by her to the American soldiers. Several launches were despatched to

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take him. Troops surrounded his rock and he was ordered to surrender. But Gekira, game to the last, withdrew with his men into a cave whose mouth was washed by the sea, and there made his last stand. They tried words on him, and smoke, and musket-fire, but nothing less than dynamite could settle that account. They blew Gekira up ; and so for a time comparative peace prevailed in the Mindoro Sea.

Naturally Gekira had his imitators, but these were all small fry and only scared the timid like myself. Excursions on the water did not tempt me just then. But the little walled city began to seem smaller each day. I pined for a sight of the open country and for a climb on the green-clad hills. Dicky Gibbs warned me that I would be taking my life in my hands if I gave way to this desire, but at last in desperation I argued that it was better to peg out in the open like a free man than be smothered within these fortress walls, which anyhow could always be scaled with the aid of a 9-foot bamboo pole.

"If you feel that way," he said, "I'll take you out and show you several things worth seeing."

We both set out well armed, he with his army gun as usual, a bolo and ten packets of Alhambra cigarettes, I with a heavy black Camogan walking-stick and a French briar pipe.

I am not a great hand at describing the beauties of nature, so you must not expect me to paint what I saw. But if the Garden of Eden made half as brave a show as the scenes that met my eyes at every turn it more than deserved to be called an earthly paradise.

This aquamarine and peridot island ran in gentle undulating folds from coast to coast, forty miles east to west and twenty from north to south, with a hillock here and a mountain there, Bud Daho over-topping all and holding

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silent watch over his unruly brown children the Moros. The soil, when one could see it, looked exceedingly rich. We met with several shallow water-courses, with quiet hidden lakes and gushing brooks, and there was one noisy tumbling waterfall whose sparkling spray in the blazing sun tempted us to undress and risk being taken unawares.

What a profusion of living green of every shade, grasses and shrubs and trees ! My guide pointed out as we strode along the banana, the abacca (which yields the famous Manila hemp), the famous mango, whose delicious fruit savours slightly of turpentine, the mangostan, king of fruits and delight of Eastern kings, the orange, tangerine, lime and many others of the citron tribe, the pawpaw with its luscious cinnamon-coloured pulp, the durian which smells as bad as it tastes good, and everywhere the generous coconut palm. Tough pliant reeds wound in and out along the ground, some of them 500 feet or more in length. These the natives split and use to tie their house roofs to the poles and for their water-craft and for everything, in fact, that involves tying. In the flooded paddies sprouted the young rice, the bread of the people, and in the trees sat many-hued cockatoos, chiding each other in caustic tones.

Monkeys came down to the lowest branches as we passed, to get a close peep at the latest London fashion ; several wild pigs made off in alarm before us recognising the smell of bacon-eaters, and the spotted deer ran away so fast that they almost left their spots behind. We only saw one serpent, but that was quite enough, I think, to remind us that we were in paradise.

As we went along Dicky regaled me with the story of the great fight the Moros fought against the Americans on Mount Daho, how they climbed the mountain with wives

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and children, how they built a cotta—three circles of stout bamboo stockading—in an inaccessible place where even the mountain guns firing day and night could not destroy it. The Americans lost many men in this encounter, for the Moros with reckless bravery and armed only with their home-ground double-edged knives, sallied out time after time, using their babies as shields.

The end of it all? There is no need really to say what happened; but the Moro learnt no lesson from it, and kept on building other cottas at other times and places. They certainly kept the American Army in training for its future ordeal in France.

We had come to a part of the country which was not under cultivation. As far as the eye could see there were no more trees, but the ground was covered with a close shrub of a kind unknown to me. Dicky, however, proudly displaying his superior knowledge, called it "*Mimosa Pudica*," which left me little wiser.

"Stand quiet," he said, "and I'll give you something to write home about."

Then with his finger he touched the nearest leaf of a plant on the edge of a field. And then a marvellous thing happened. As the touch of a button may light a whole town, so his touching one single leaf in this community of plants set all the leaves of all the plants in that plain folding back upon their stems.

Here was magic indeed, it seemed, a most wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten sight. It impressed itself upon me as nothing else had done before or since. And I realised that some members of the vegetable kingdom, at least, may possess an awareness closely bordering on that consciousness which is man's greatest privilege and proudest possession.

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On our return to the citadel Dicky Gibbs promised to take me some night when it was tolerably safe to a spot where he knew of a cluster of sacred orchids which bloomed only once in so many years and then for only one hour on the first night of the new moon. He said that the natives went out then in crowds to worship the flowers ; but perhaps their motive was to admire rather than to worship. Orchids, indeed, are closely associated in my mind with Jolo, because there was not a porch of any house without them. The Chinese or Filipino homes, the American customs house, the military barracks, the hospital, all displayed orchids suspended from a rafter in moss-filled halves of coconut shells.

Many of the blooms were anything but rare, but they were exquisite in shape and tint ; others were less beautiful but were hard to come by ; and some again were both rare and so beautiful that I could not take my eyes off them. What unearthly mysterious blooms orchids are ! Have they come to us from some other planet ?

But now trade began to revive again. Before many months the scare which Gekira the pirate and the lesser piratical lights had caused among the Sulu island-folk had subsided. The waters of the Mindoro Sea became safe again for traffic, for fishing, for diving and dredging.

Many strange visitors did I receive now on my porch above Don Pedro's saloon, and the rare pearls I bought from them adorn to-day many a lovely woman in America and Europe. I am not sure, but it seems to me now on looking back, that the pearls I bought at that particular time were of better colour and greater lustre than any I bought in later years. It may be merely my fancy, of course, but for one reason the pearls may actually have been better then than they were afterwards.

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That first year I bought for the most part from natives who dived naked to extraordinary depths—thirty fathoms of water and even deeper—or from those Samals who trailed the gadjon, or three-pronged stone-weighted hardwood dredge, across the bottom of the sea. The naked divers were men whose forebears for generations had descended to the ocean-floor lured by the hidden prize. They had developed a lung capacity which often permitted them to go deeper than can those who plunge down in diver's dress and are kept constantly supplied with fresh air from the pumps above. The men who trailed the dredge trusted largely to chance. I often thought that a man in a balloon floating 2,000 feet high in the air and trailing a weighted line and hook would stand a better chance of snatching a hat from the head of a man on top of a bus !

At any rate, pearls coming from these greater depths had had time to mature and grow in beauty. The number of Moros who came to see me increased, and instead of employing an occasional interpreter, I now took into my service three men : Abu Bakur, the Arab's son, a well-spoken youth of twenty-two who dressed European fashion, but sported a fez, whom I made my chief interpreter ; Ali and Maideen, the two black Malabar men, pearl-buyers and traders in their own right, whom I engaged as my super-touts, brokers and go-betweens. They were born pearl-pimps, those two, quick to hear and to act, ready to set out in the frailest vinta at a moment's notice at midnight in the stiffest breeze, if news should come in of a lucky find. They were cunning, had endless patience, and could easily outstay and outwit a Moro or even a Chinaman. They were rogues, liars and cheats in the way of business, and conformed to a strict code of personal honour, albeit outside the Koran.

Sayid ben Abu Bakur, who for short I always called Sayid, for I had no time to spare for his full name, also to save time, I suppose, familiarly called me Master Loo-iss; and from then on I was Master Loo-iss to all; to Americans, Moros, Chinos, Filipinos, to the Sultan and the divers and the Government men.

Sayid, no doubt, had some virtues. He also had some failings, chief of which was his habit of helping himself twice a day to a dose out of every bottle and box in my medicine chest. He had immense faith in the white man's pharmacopœia. When I warned him that this was a dangerous practice he doubted my sincerity and fully believed my warning was due merely to my meanness. He would of a morning lay the foundation with a dose of Epsom salts, then mix himself a delightful glass or two of Eno's. Three two-grain pills of quinine he swallowed with glee, knowing that his mosquito bar was full of holes. Then he dipped into box after box according to the labels he happened to fancy that day.

Amongst the Moros who came to see me there was one who brought a pearl of moderate size, but of exquisite quality. Contrary to my expectation he asked a low price, quite unlike the usual practice of his tribe. I bought and paid. He then gave me to understand that what I had bought was only one of many hundreds to be had on the small island he came from, and that most were in the hands of his kinsmen. Would I go with him in his vinta; it was only a day's sail? I could take a man or two with me. But to make sure of the goods I should have to bring the gold with me.

Now in the ordinary way I frequently made short buying expeditions to the various small islands in a launch or in an open Moro vinta, but there was something in the eyes of

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my visitor which warned me of danger. I put him off without saying anything definite and made inquiries from some of the local religious leaders who had the islands' *Who's Who* in their heads ; and I was assured that the party was absolutely trustworthy. But long after I heard what would have been my fate if I had ventured on that trip. I and my party were to have been disposed of in a manner which would have provoked no suspicion and my gold distributed among the nest of cut-throats.

No sooner had I forgotten this particular client, than the Moros on the Island of Jolo, the hill-folk, became restless again, and it was reported that they had been seen bringing out their old bronze lantaker guns, furbishing their rusty lances and sharpening their bolos. Tales of their doings were continually brought in by friendly Moros, and by the general run of Government informers.

The hill-folk's grievance this time was the payment of one peso for each male over sixteen years of age : the poll-tax. This was the only tax they were required to pay, and in return for it the Government gave them roads, light-houses, patrolled the seas, guarded the coasts, established hospitals and promised schools. But the hill-people said they wanted none of these, any more than their fathers had done, and a peso was a peso. Moreover, the Koran laid it down and their Imams preached that tribute could not be paid to the unbeliever, and as the United States Government did not believe in their Prophet they would sooner fight and all be killed.

The cavalry was on the spot and the infantry was brought in swift launches from other parts of the islands. One moonless night the mules and the packers moved out of the city gates with all the available troops, and we in Jolo were left with only the sentries and the military hospital nurses

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for garrison. Throughout the long dark silent nights we watched and prayed and watched again.

From the distant hills came frequently the booming call and answer of the great bronze gongs which, miles apart, spoke one to another, voicing their hatred of the infidel; and the mountains echoed back every sound. But we in the citadel lay with wide-open eyes behind our mosquito netting, the sweat pouring from us through the sultry nights and with the fear of death in our hearts. If we slept at all it was by fits and starts. The least noise, a bat flitting past the porch, a moth on the wing or even the flutter of a leaf sufficed to bring us back to a tormented wakefulness. Outside the citadel, the ruthless frenzied Moro held back by a thin khaki line of vigilant soldiers; inside the room where we lay was a still more ruthless foe, the spotted anopheles, with only a meshed cotton bar between her and her prey. Death threatened us everywhere.

What a relief it was when the dawn stole into the room and the deceptive hat-and-umbrella stand in the corner began to look like itself instead of a Moro ready to spring. Then a deep reverberating boom—the sunrise gun followed close by the jubilant brazen notes of the Réveillé. Réveillé ! Wake up ! Wake up ! The horrible night has passed ! This is another day !

CHAPTER XI

MEDICINE MEN AND MONKEYS

IN the citadel we boasted an American pharmacy. It was quite an up-to-date drug-store in the sense that you could buy there notepaper and envelopes, ice-cream in three shades, popcorn, fire-crackers, secondhand Moro krisses, picture-postcards of Juramentados with trailing guts or of the Royal Family of Sulu, also native basket-ware, pottery and bronze betel-nut outfits ; and if you were really lucky and came on the right day you could even obtain vaseline and medicated cotton wool.

The drug-store man was a disgruntled son of Arkansas with six fingers to each hand. I often sat with him in a game of bluff, and when I had half an hour to spare I would sit in his pharmacy behind the globes of coloured water listening to words of wisdom, and abuse of those whom he disliked—and they were many.

His wife had no children, so she kept monkeys instead, monkeys of every kind and size known on the island. Some of them looked like wistful Filipino children, others more like baboons, and one, a silver-grey monk with a red-raw back, who looked like a raw beefsteak on a silver grill. She had bought none of them ; but as each departing soldier left his monkey behind she would adopt the orphan, and so she became mother to a large brood.

I am sure these monkeys could dispense. They sat on the counter, on shelves, swung from the rafters or went for airings on the roof. One little chap had learnt the use of money, and if no one would give him a centavo he would go

and open the till, take out a brown coin and make straight for the Chino tienda across the road. He knew how many ground-nuts he should get for a centavo, and the Chino dared not cheat him out of a single nut or it would have taken him a month to sort his goods out.

The tricks these monkeys invented and the games they played would fill a book. One fine day we were rather a crowd in the drug-store, because a boat had come in, and were treating each other to ice-creams. On the rafters and shelves the monkeys were sitting as usual, languorous and half asleep in the heat, which was too much even for them. Then all of a sudden the little chap with the actuarial mind woke up with a start. A brain-wave had struck him. He came down from his shelf and disappeared. Presently a crowd of native children gathered in front of the drug-store, giggling and screaming and roaring with delight. They were all looking up at the roof, and drawn by the noise we left our ice-creams and went out. There on the roof sat that little scallywag of a monkey ripping his mistress's best pillow to shreds. The feathers were flying.

Out came the drug-store man himself to see what all the commotion was about. When he saw what was happening he talked to the monkey in American, he talked to him in Malay and in Moro, he cajoled, he stamped his foot and he swore. But all to no purpose. He went away to find a long bamboo pole, but by that time the other monkeys had awakened too from their siesta and felt they were being done out of a treat. They came and looked and understood. A moment later each monkey—there must have been twenty of them—carrying a pillow, a cushion or a bolster, went up on the roof to join their leader. Then there was a frantic ripping and tearing, till all the feathers from all those pillows and cushions covered the roof

like a layer of snow. I never laughed so much in all my life !

A propos of monkeys and their ways, it was interesting to me to learn that if a domesticated pet took it into his head to run away and attempted to join his tribe in the woods of the plain or on the mountain side he was invariably driven off by his kindred. They had no use for one who fairly stank of civilisation. As he could not go back to the city without losing his new-found freedom, he stayed for good outside the walls, and thus there were three castes of monkey on the island : the wild fellows of the forest, the citadel pets, and the betwixt and between who hung about the city walls.

At about this time there appeared at our mess a little white-haired gentleman calm and dignified of bearing. He said he was a doctor of medicine and had travelled throughout the Philippines to find a likely spot where a man might practise the healing art, live by his craft and find time besides to commune with Nature.

At meal-times he chewed his garbanzas carefully and always seemed much engrossed in thought. Only now and then he would put a pointed question to one or other of the company. He said he was not in the least concerned about the continual fighting with the Moros, and anyhow what business had they, the Americans, to lord it over the simple brown fellows ? I think this remark was provoked by the fact that young Cole, the Governor's secretary, who sat with us, would hear and report the words to his chief. Dr. Russell was never afraid to say what he thought, and never sought for the softer word to turn away wrath.

Early one morning after breakfast he went for a stroll alone outside the wall to see a bit of the island. By one o'clock dinner-time we were all anxiously awaiting his

return ; by half past one most of the boys were sure that the Moros had got him. "But you will see," I said, "he'll just have been having a good look at what he wants to see."

Sure enough, soon after in strolled the doctor, and the boys shouted with one accord, "Where the devil have you been, Doc?"

"I went for a stroll," he said as he cut a slice off the loaf, "and visited the cemetery."

"There you are, boys," I chimed in ; "didn't I tell you he would make for the place of most interest to him? A cemetery is a physician's warehouse."

The doctor looked across at me. There was a twinkle in his eye, and from that moment we were fast friends. His coming brought a new interest into my life. He was a rare character, with a rare history.

Born in Russia, of good family, he received the best education Russia could give him. But as a student he became a member of an association whose aim was revolutionary. He was arrested and sent to Siberia. He escaped from Siberia, went to America, completed his medical studies there and took an American degree, practised for several years in California and devoted a good deal of his time and energy to preaching socialism in our time. He attracted the attention of the Hawaiian queen, who appointed him her private physician, and he served her in this capacity until the day of her abdication. Then he took to sugar planting in the Sandwich Islands, and became a Hawaiian senator. But during the Russo-Japanese War he obeyed the appeal of an influential Jewish committee in New York and went on their behalf to Japan to look after the interests of Russian prisoners of war who were of the Jewish faith. He stayed on in Japan and practised medicine

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in various parts of that country. At the age of nearly three score and ten he visited the Philippines for the first time, and, becoming enchanted with the beauty of the islands, decided to stay in them for a while. For a change, he said, the change being, as he facetiously explained, "Beri-beri and hookworm."

And now the doctor had settled in Jolo. But he did not stay in the citadel, because, said he, what has a man of three score and ten to fear from death? Yet I never knew a man who took greater care than he of his person.

One day he was pouring tea for me on the porch of his small bungalow, which stood in full view of the city walls and in full hearing of the prisoners who squatted behind wire mesh in the calaboose near by. As we talked and paused and talked again, and the voices from the calaboose came across to us on the breeze, it almost sounded as though the prisoners were sharing in our conversation.

The doctor spoke disdainfully of the baubles I handled, and said that I and my kind lived merely by grace of the folly of women. I gave him the obvious retort that if mankind were wiser it would have no need of medicine men.

Without deigning to answer my sally he said, pursuing his own train of thought, "I've read it all up in books. Do you know what your priceless pearls really are? Calcium carbonate, aragonite and conchiolin. That's all they are!"

"This is very disconcerting, Doctor," I said, "to any pearl-fancier; but you can't disillusion a lover by giving him scientific proof that his adored is only so much nitrogen, carbon, mineral salts and water! But I don't want to talk shop now. Tell me something of your own experiences."

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He sat in silence for a while and then said, "Some day I may place all my experiences in writing in your hands for publication when I am gone, and if I told you everything now I would only be repeating myself then. Rather, let us talk of men and things around us now."

The doctor was a great botanist, herbalist and horticulturist, and I sat at his feet and learnt—nothing, worse luck ! On one occasion I remember that he had a great argument with the Government horticulturist, who afterwards told me that the doctor knew more about his own subject than he himself did—and that man was one of the best Kew Gardens had ever sent out.

The doctor said, "I have something here which, although you claim to be an expert on gems, I'm almost sure you won't know." He brought out a pill-box and pushed it across to me. I opened it and peeped at the contents, a white, opalescent, spherical object.

"I know what it is," I said. "It is what they call a coconut pearl, but this no more came out of a coconut than all Turkish delight comes from Turkey. This thing is a pearl all right, but it has no market value. It is the product of a big conch clam that lives in tropical waters. Sailors buy the big shells and take them home and you may see them at the doors of cottages in England. There is such a thing as a real coconut pearl, only it is rare. Many things are technically pearls : every pearl is a kind of cyst and every cyst a kind of pearl, and there isn't an animal or a plant but produces a pearl of some kind. Why, the eye of any fish is a pearl, if you like to stretch a point !"

As I spoke the sunset gun was fired and almost immediately bright day turned into night. The doctor raised his hand and pointed to a clump of trees. Every branch and twig, every stalk and leaf was ablaze with moving fireflies,

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a multitude of pulsing lights. It was a wonderful sight, the first of its kind I had seen on the island.

This was only one of many conversations I used to have with my old friend before he left the islands to return to Japan. Even after that I managed to see a good deal of him for several years and correspond with him. But after a while his letters, first from Japan and then from China, grew shorter and fewer. The last communication but one was a request to submit a philosophical book of his in MS. to Mr. H. G. Wells for comment. But I was still in the East and his book was sent on to London. His last letter was like an S.O.S. It came from a famine-stricken part of China whither he had gone to help and heal. I remember he wrote—I did not understand then the full significance of his words—"Our food is giving out." He was not the man to eat when others starved. And from that day I have never been able to find out through any of my correspondents in China or Japan what happened to him.

CHAPTER XII

WARRIORS ON WOODEN HORSES

THERE was always some little diversion to keep one amused. One day, for instance, I was sitting on my porch writing my weekly letter home when two Moros carrying a big load stepped up and asked me if I wanted to buy a cayman for a pet. On the two bamboo poles they were carrying between them were two ugly crocodiles tied up with thongs of reed. I should say they each measured about 5 feet from head to tail.

I had no intention of buying, but native-like the Moros were in no hurry to depart and calmly set their burden upon the floor, while they stayed to smoke my cigarettes. By some means or another one of the crocs. had rid himself of the thong which secured his snout and made a grab at the foot of one of his would-be sellers. The man did no business that day !

Another day I discovered that several of my European and tropical suits were without buttons. I called my Filipino boy and rated him soundly for stealing the buttons off my clothes. But he looked very much hurt and said, "Yo no soy ladron, señor. The buttons have been eaten by the kakelaks."

"What !" said I, in high dudgeon. "Will you stand there and tell me that cockroaches can eat bone buttons overnight !"

"You shall see for yourself, señor," he answered.

That night I sat up and watched. The kakelaks were indeed mighty feeders.

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Jolo—wonderful, mysterious island! Nothing that ever happened on you was according to programme. With you the unexpected is the rule. When æons ago you revolted against Poseidon by refusing to stay quietly on the ocean bed, he vowed to keep you contrary until eternity should wash out your offence.

But why should I alone have been witness of your contrariness one sultry afternoon soon after my interview with the kakelaks? Why should I alone have heard the hail-storm descending out of a deep blue cloudless sky? Why should I alone have heard the ice pellets, hazel-nut size, hammer the tin roof for well over a minute? Shouldn't that rapid machine-gun fire have wakened the others who were taking their siestas in the rooms around me? How could they sleep through it all? No one else saw, no one else heard, and I stood alone on the porch to witness the rare sight. No one would believe me later when I told them the story—had all the people in the citadel been enchanted? Or had I been asleep myself and dreamt the whole business? Had I, on the other hand, been translated into a dimension beyond the three which set their bounds to man's normal senses? *Quien sabe?*

At that time it was my practice in good weather to go down after supper to the causeway by the wooden pier and sit for hours on end on a stray cask or packing-case under the wonderfully starred sky. My briar then was all the company I craved for. These were unforgettable nights. The stars would be so very near and friendly. The sea would be a duplicate sky with a host of reflected slowly swaying lights, between which darts of phosphorescent life would flicker. Zebra fish would come and go in shoals to have a peep at the curious fire-dance of a myriad nameless water-things that had no permanent form. Across the bay

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the two sentinel islands lay deep in shadowy slumber. Not even the passing russet sails of an endless string of fishing praus could stir them. To my right, silhouetted in the pale moonlight, were the Samal houses of Bus-Bus, the fisherman's village, built on bamboo and mangrove piles.

It is late for you, people of Bus-Bus, to be astir, but the sound of your tom-toms tells of high revelry by night. The world shall know that your crab-pots were full to-day and that you have maimed two devil-fish.

From San Remon behind me would come betimes on the wing of a southern breeze the quivering twang of a lute. The air would be so still that I could hear an American soldier whisper into a Japanese ear. To my left the Chino pier would look like a blazing snake a mile long, and sometimes the clatter and banging of Mah-Jong stones would blur the swish of the waves.

But as I sat looking at the peaceful water, beyond and above all towered the shadow of Daho behind me—the mountain where this very evening brown men were lying in ambush for white, and the new spirit wrestled with the old. And while I was dreaming there, suddenly the moon would hide behind a bank of clouds; a fine mist would descend on the water. The curtain had been rung down. In the auditorium the heat had been turned off. And even the ash in my briar would be cold.

Every day for two weeks the ambulance men had been rushing the wounded to the military hospital, and much of our time was spent in visiting the sick and in the performance of a sadder duty. Even the few white civilians in the citadel had a gruelling time of it, and anything at all that could raise a smile was welcomed with open arms.

Dicky Gibbs was a born showman, and although he didn't know it, his unconscious humour often saved us from

distraction. He always had a mad scheme or two up his sleeve, and the wonder was that he ever found others madder than himself to back him.

One day, probably for want of a sympathetic ear elsewhere, he came and tried the early-bird game on me. I was standing pouring the first morning douche over my back with a salmon can when he burst in upon me.

"Gee," he said, "I couldn't put off any longer. I come by a great idea last night and you'll be just tickled to death to hear because there's money in it for you—for us——"

"Pass me that towel over there," I said, "and spit out your idea if it hurts to keep it any longer on your chest. But I warn you, I'm not an investor."

Dicky explained. A certain son-of-a-gun of a Dutchman had got stranded in Kudat or Sandakan (he was not sure which) on the island of Borneo—the British part. This Dutchman had brought out a show to the East Indies, a circus all complete, with ruddy roundabouts and blinking swings, dinkey ponies—three of 'em—that could do tricks and dance on their toes, an elephant who could play the clown, a giant, a dwarf and a bearded lady. The Dutchman had only gone broke because of the new fashion. The Javanese, the Celebes natives and even the Dyaks of Borneo had lately tired of circuses and had become movie fans.

"The fellow's stuck there," he said with a gleam in his eye. "Can't go forrard or back, I hear, and there's our chance. Two thousand bucks will buy him out."

"The idea is great, Dicky," I said, rubbing myself down, "but who is to find the money, and if it can be found who's to run the circus, and if it can be run who's to provide the grub for the elephant, and even if someone can be found to

treat him as an honoured guest for a month or so who's to drag the Moros to the circus? Haven't we movies in this burg too?"

"Cheese it," said Dicky. "Why are you so full of objections? Let's sit down quietly and argue it out over breakfast."

The long and short of it was this: I was to finance the circus and he was to run it. The profits we were to share fifty-fifty.

"And the losses?" I inquired.

"There ain't going to be any losses." That was final.

We argued through the porridge, the bacon and three eggs apiece. We wrestled through a whole marmalade jar, but all he got out of me was a promise to take a tenth share in the venture because I was sure that nine other fools could not be mustered in the whole archipelago. But Dicky Gibbs knew better. He thought others had a high opinion of my judgment; and using my sporting offer as a lever he secured the nine other subscriptions and proceeded to allot shares. Fortunately for us, the elephant had in the meantime died of a food shortage, the giant and the dwarf had set up in business for themselves, and the bearded lady had tried a new safety razor blade. All that was consigned from Kudat to the circus syndicate in Jolo, therefore, were the musical instruments whole and the roundabouts and swings in convenient sections.

Now the fun started. We were ten shareholders, ten directors and ten general managers, as befitted an incorporated circus. The cash we eventually lost we took out in the fun we got from the affair.

We chose a spot in Tulay outside the citadel as the site of the circus, within smell of the market. The swings and roundabouts were fitted together to the huge delight of

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hundreds of naked brown urchins. Now the opening day was at hand ! It had come ! We were open for business !

At first the Moros passing by on their way to and from market paid little attention to the blatant music which was more savage than their own, or to the whirling roundabouts and the creaking swings. Dicky catered that day and the next to half-boozed American soldiers and to the sophisticated Filipino muchachos. But by degrees the Moros too were roused. They had watched these madly whirling and swaying wooden horses and mules and seen the shrieking muchachos aloft in the swings for two whole days before they allowed even one of their youngsters to set foot on the strange-looking unholy things. Then one intrepid full-grown Moro gave it a trial, then another, and another. Then ten went on together. The market grew empty of vendors and buyers. Every Moro from the plains or the hills who had come in on foot or on carabaos and ponies to buy or sell now sat, betel-chewing and contented, on a wooden horse, ostrich or zebra, careering in wild circles to the mad fiesta tunes of a cracked ex-military drum and improvised cymbals, while the wives held the ponies and carabaos on the edge of a crowd of bare-bellied phlegmatic Chinos.

But the real fun was this. Once a Moro had got on the roundabout or swing you couldn't get him off again. His wife might yell, his youngsters slobber, newcomers clamour for the privilege of a ride, but he wouldn't budge for hours. He figured that the five copper centavos he had paid had bought the whole show.

In the cotta on the mountain the fighting men heard tales of this newfangled amusement. They sheathed their krisses and came down the long trail in single file for a mad

ride on real wooden horses. For the time being they forgot war.

After that, we on the island settled down again. For me trade was brisk. I was, as Don Pedro declared, "buying my head off." Indeed, I was now beginning to get known to those who mattered. And just because so many pearls were brought to me at that time I never had enough ready money. There was no bank on the island. The English pound was equal to ten pesos, but a pound in gold was worth eleven. Naturally I preferred to pay in gold and I had given instructions to my bank in Singapore to ship gold coin for all my remittances from London or Paris. Very often my shipments of specie were long delayed and might have caused me great embarrassment, or, if another big buyer had in the meantime arrived on the scene, might even have lost me my trade.

One day when I had come to the end of my tether and had already borrowed as much from Don Pedro as I could without blushing, a whole crowd of distant island divers and fishers squatted on my porch waiting their turn. By now I hadn't a bean, but buy I must by hook or by crook. I had a lucky idea. I remembered the two by four rubber stamp which had been made for me in Singapore before I set out for the islands. On this stamp was my name and the words "pearl-buyer" in English, Chinese and in Arabic Malay. It was a truly imposing affair. In my perplexity I brought this out with its pad, and as I settled the price with each native, I wrote an I.O.U. for the amount and impressed it with my Great Seal. The first Moro looked it over and sniffed. He had never seen such money, though it looked as good as any bank-note, if not better, and besides he had seen me print it. But Sayid, my inter-

preter, without knowing anything, but just because it was the easiest thing to say, told him in Moro it was all right. He took it and went. The others did likewise. For a whole week I bought on tick for tens of thousands of pesos from fellows who would not have trusted their best friend with a handful of rice.

The result was curious. Some of my customers traded these I.O.U.'s with the Chino merchants in town, and the Chinos in turn took them to the postmistress while the postmaster was ill in bed. She paid for them out of good Government funds as though they were Post Office money orders. When the postmaster returned to his office and found that he had, instead of cash, a pearl-buyer's I.O.U.'s, he went up in the air because he was expecting the Government auditor by the next boat in. He came to me in a great state, but all I could say was that I was expecting my money any time too.

In the meantime the Moros who had gone back to their islands with my paper had been put wise by someone who knew better and they were coming in open vintas to get cash or my head. If the Singapore steamer had docked six hours later I should have gone to—Heaven, and the postmaster to gaol.

The same week I received a cable from my partners in Paris. I was to stop buying for a while. A year of mangos, mosquitos and Moros called for a spell at home. I settled with Don Pedro, took leave of my friends and sailed. In Paris I requested an accounting from my partners. They were greatly hurt that I should want any money. In fact, there was no money for me. Of course, they were in possession, for had I not shipped them the goods? So nine points were in their favour, and the tenth I waived for the sake of peace. Again experience was my share of the

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profits and it was good to be home once more. Of my partners, one later turned painter: he painted a horse about which the stewards of the Jockey Club had something to say; the other subsequently displeased the Empress Zita of Austria, and she also found that nine points were stronger than one.

CHAPTER XIII

CHINO ONG AND MORO SAYID

CAN the youth be happy away from the girl he loves? Can the sailor remain content ashore? I longed for my island by day and dreamt of it by night.

However, three months after coming home I managed to raise a sum sufficient to set me up again as a pearl-buyer in the fisheries with power to dispose of my purchases in any market to suit me. This arrangement at last got me out of the clutches of rapacious friends.

As I was going down Ludgate Hill to Cook's to book my passage to Singapore, I met an old business colleague who for over three years had owed me thirty pounds. I tried to get it out of him then, but his hard-luck story disarmed me. Besides, he offered to pay me something in kind and asked me to visit him that evening.

To my surprise, when I arrived, he brought out some five large cigar-boxes full of curiously fashioned mother-of-pearl birds. Some looked like dying ducks, others like newborn chickens, and they all had ruby-coloured glass eyes. These he offered me as a ten-shilling in the pound instalment on his debt. When I laughed he added a ten-pound note to the chickens and ducks, and I forgave him the rest of the debt.

I had half a mind to throw the things into the nearest dust-bin, but I carried them home instead and, much against the advice of my wife, packed them away in my trunk after amusing myself a whole evening counting them. There

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were about 10,000 of them ; and later I wished there had been more.

Six weeks after buying pearl chicks and pearl ducks in London I set foot on my pearl island again.

My friend Don Pedro was on the dock-side to meet me, of course, and to tell me all in one breath that he had had many opportunities of letting my room and the bit of porch that belonged to it, but he knew I would return, and there it was all ready for me to occupy with new green curtains at the window.

Besides Pedro there was quite a distinguished crowd to meet Master Loo-iss and Tuan Loo-iss. Ranged on the pier were all my Jap, Chino, Malay, Filipino, Moro and Mestizzo friends, everyone waving and shouting to me. It was like a home-coming.

This time I had come resolved to establish myself properly, to open an office and a warehouse, and to do the many things one would expect from the first white trader who opened an office on the island. I was also determined to compete with the Chinese traders on their own ground. Of course I knew it would be a battle royal, but that only gave spice to the enterprise.

My first and immediate difficulty was the lack of a suitable office and warehouse space. The Chinese at once smelt a rat and saw to it that no one should rent me even a cubicle large enough to swing a cat in. They had held the trade in the island so long and so exclusively that they were not willing to allow any white interloper to butt into their game. They were a clannish lot too, those yellow men from Kwantung and Amoy Province, keen as mustard, close as clams, but very straight according to their lights.

It was in the early days of my second coming to the island that I received an offer from one of the big petroleum com-

panies to take over their agency for the southern island group. As a considerable stock of these highly inflammable goods had to be kept on hand and I could neither secure a warehouse outside Jolo nor was allowed by the city regulations to store them within the wall, I spoke to Captain Oya, a Chinese merchant, on the matter. He agreed to take over the agency, to store the goods, to distribute, collect and do everything else needful. I was to receive one-third of the commission. No document was then or ever after prepared and signed by us. We just shook hands on the deal. Yet a score of years has passed since, and with the greatest regularity he has kept his pact to this day.

I had noticed that the pearling folk were all much keener on disposing of their mother-of-pearl shell than of their pearls. I discovered the reason for this. The removal of the mud-covered shell meant a clean boat, leave for the crews, and an assurance to the owner that none of his catch would vanish while his back was turned. Hence the M.o.P. was sold first. But the wily Chinaman wouldn't let it go at that. He had to see the pearls, and once he saw he bought. I therefore had to get into the pearl-shell game too. Well, I had laid my plans and was ready to bid against any Chinaman, for whereas they were buying for the Singapore or Hong-Kong market, my buying mandates came from London and New York, the *Ultima Thule* of the trade. The Chinese did not know that. But as I wanted to play the game I went round to the Chinese merchants and told them I had commissions to buy shell and would prefer to buy from them rather than from the fishers. Their reply was never a plain "No." That is not the Chino way. A smile, a smirk, a "we shall see"—"not this time, better luck next month. . . ." That is their refusal.

But I had undertaken to supply pearl-shell and pearl-shell I must get. I set up a multigraph, and as my cabled quotations came in I offered tip-top London and New York prices to every fishing man. In fact I often offered 20 per cent. more than the Chinos could themselves get from their correspondents. That made them sit up. But still they knew I had no storage room and thought they had me there.

But on the other hand, to their consternation I took into my service old Ong, a wizened worldly wise Chinaman, who had grown grey in the service of the leading Chinese traders, but had been cast adrift by them for some offence connected with the joss-house; for old Ong was an enlightened Confucian Chinese and did not hold with their superstitious practices. He knew every celestial wile, was an expert on the grading of all native products, could write as good a letter in English as in Chinese, and was as honest as the sun. He came to me for thirty pesos a month—three pounds in English money—and thought himself passing rich, for his wants were small.

Ong soon taught me the difference between gold and silver-lipped shell and shell of the smoky beard, how much to deduct for mud on the bivalves, why wormy backs were not worth as much as sound, what Trocas shells and window shells were, what they should bring and the best market for them, a useful smattering of the pearl-fishing laws, and a great deal more besides. He also knew the grades of Manila hemp, how to sort, dry and bale abacca, and everything there was to know about the tricks of the natives and Chinos with beeswax, copra, bêche-de-mer, gutta-percha and rice. He was a whole encyclopædia bound in a pair of black grass-cloth pants and a blue Nanking vest. There was nothing to him in the way of flesh and bone;



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just a Chinese skin in which dwelt an honest Chinese soul.

If Ong wanted to recruit labour, every coolie in the place was ready to leave his boss, and any Moro tao would take five copper centavos less per day to work for Ong. He knew my greatest need and spoke to a Jap who was in some Chino's clutches. That Jap had a go-down in the finest spot I could wish for—in the plaza facing the customs house where the flame trees bloomed. Ong brought me this man at seven in the morning and at eight his grasping Chino creditor was paid in full. In the afternoon I sat in my office on the plaza, facing the gorgeous flame trees, and Ong was my chief-of-staff. He was already sweeping the large room behind for a go-down, pleased with himself, with his new boss and with the whole world.

Now Ong and I began to buy pearl-shell to beat the band, and thus I too got first offer of the pearlers' gems. Every hour of the working day some Chino spy would be standing round to watch the cleaning of the shell, the packing and the marking with my brand of case after case; and word went forth that Ong must be brought back again into the Chinese fold. But Ong was white, and drove the nails with greater zest than ever into my packing-cases.

Said Sayid ben Abu Bakr, my chief tout and broker, "If you, Master Loo-iss, would advance me the money for a pearling boat I shall be your slave for life."

I replied, "Sayid, my son, in the village of London where I come from, no man is allowed to keep slaves, but when you've earned one thousand pesos in brokerage fees, bring them to me and I shall order a boat to be built for you in Borneo, where as you know they build well. Then you can pay off the rest in pearls and shell, and if Allah prospers you, you can then build a second for yourself."

Sayid took me at my word. He soon brought me the thousand pesos, for this was how he made his cash. He used to accompany me on my rounds to Tulay and the Chino pier, which juts out a mile or so into the sea and where most of the sea-farmers dwell in houses built on swaying piles over the mud. On one occasion, to mention only one, a Chinaman with whom I had not dealt before had a large and valuable pearl. He named a price, and as he spoke Kwantung, which I did not understand, Sayid seized the opportunity and interpreted a thousand pesos more. The gem was a good one, I was satisfied with the price, and so I sent the money through Sayid. Later the same day I happened to hear what the real price of the pearl had been. Still, I kept my own council.

On the next morning, when Sayid came into my room, he helped himself as usual to my bottle of Eno's fruit salt. But with the help of the drug-store man I had added something that made my friend Sayid deadly sick within half an hour. He went home and lay where he fell on his bed and groaned loudly and thought he was going to die. He sent for me and put his hand under the pillow and brought out the thousand pesos in notes. He confessed his theft and begged me to make the money "honest." I knew he would rather die than part with it—sin or no sin—and I knew also that he would surely die of fright if I did not pronounce the money "honest gain." So I took the wad into my hands and spoke Balaam's curse in Hebrew. "Now you may keep the money, Sayid," I said. "The words I have spoken have made it clean, but you are a dirty tyke just the same, and from now on I shall watch you."

Sayid groaned and said he wished I would. But did I? Sayid was a chip of the old block. Abu Bakr his father

was an Arab. He had come to Sulu empty-handed and probably without a change of loin cloth. Now he was one of the wealthy men on the island, owned a good deal of land and some houses built of stone and rubble for which the Chinese traders paid good rentals. He also had a good store of the bright yellow stuff in the big iron-clad chest under his bed, to which he had attached three whacking great padlocks. On the rare occasions when he unfastened it, the whole family had to stand guard.

The old fellow was the real article for meanness. They told remarkable tales about this trait in his character, and his own son told me that he counted the grains of rice when he handed out the day's ration. When I asked why he did not weigh it out to save himself the trouble of counting the grains, Sayid laughed and said, "And you think my father he spend good money on such foolishnesses as a pair of scales?"

"Foolishness," I corrected, "not foolishnesses!"

"Why?" said Sayid, "scales is plu-ral."

I left it at that. "At any rate," I went on, "your father has quite a good belly on him and he looks as though he got his food somewhere."

"Well," Sayid replied, "he is Arab. He can read the Koran in Arabic too, better maybe than Hadji Ousman, that son of a bitch. That's why the Moros ask him to their houses when there is a marriage, a circumcision or a burying. Then father eats plenty to last him until the next time. But mother often is hungry, and I think she would like to break the strong box under father's bed and steal just one piece of gold—plenty for her to eat rice three times every day for a whole year!"

Abu Bakr, in spite of the scantiness of his dress and his bare feet, looked the typical Arab patriarch. He had a most

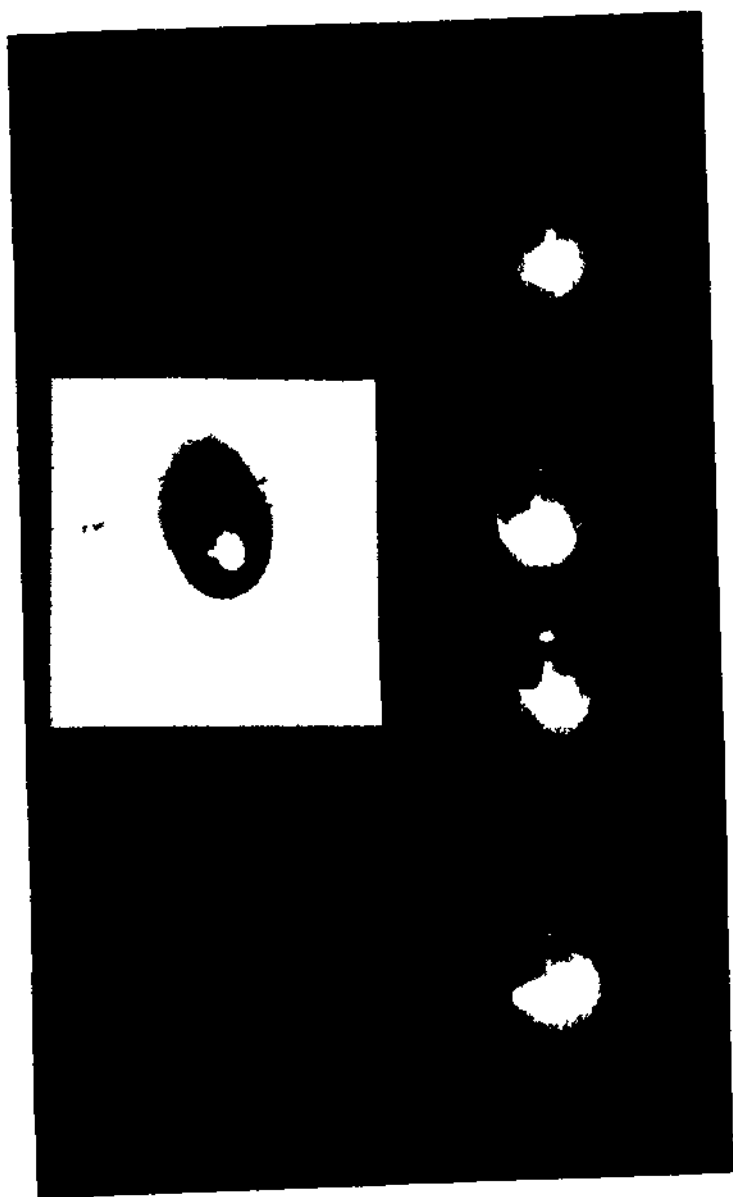
benevolent manner, and by his constant reference to Allah, gave me the impression that not only was he in the inner councils of his deity, but that, indeed, a little word from Abu Bakr would go a long way towards securing the favourable reception of a prayer.

He was a pearl-boat owner too. How he came by his boat no one knew. He didn't buy her, and he didn't build her. Some said he found her derelict off Basilan Island when out in a vinta with some of his men and that he had adopted her *sans merci*. If such was the case, he must have graced the act by quoting an appropriate slice of holy writ, for he was familiar with every Surat in the Koran and quoted Scripture in and out of season.

I frequently called upon Abu Bakr, particularly when his boat had just come off the pearling grounds, which was twice monthly during the neaps. But I could never buy pearl-shell or pearls from him. He fancied he could do better with the Chinos and I couldn't talk him out of it.

He was greatly astonished that I had read the Koran, and in fact told me that it was the only thing worth while I had ever done. He was full of pearl lore picked up from the Moros or possibly at Bahrein in the Persian Gulf, or at the Red Sea pearling stations. I loved to listen to these tales. It was from Abu Bakr that I first heard of the Malay belief that if you placed some rice and a good-sized pearl into a box with a well-fitting lid, on the second night after the new moon, and left it for so many moons, the grains of rice would change into pearls. He vouched for the truth of this, and, what was more, brought me many Moros who said they knew some other Moro whose friend's friends had had the interesting experience.

I remember speaking long after about this native superstition to several American University professors in Manila,



THE PEARLS I BOUGHT FROM DATO TAHIL.

hoping to raise a laugh. But they looked grave, and one very learned gentleman, a professor of proto-zoology (or the bug-man, as his scamp of a lad called him) turned to me and said solemnly, "My dear sir, there is a substratum of truth in every superstition. I shouldn't be at all surprised if some day this very thing you laugh at proves to be a fact." And then he continued less solemnly, "Say, give us some more of this kind of dope and lend us one of your biggest pills to put to sleep with our mutton pilaf and rice the next new moon!"

Abu Bakr could tell me of twenty-eight ailments that pearls ground to a fine powder could cure. True, there were other substances that had to be mixed with the powder: herbs, leaves, pods, barks, roots or vegetable juices. But the powder was the main thing.

"Of course," said he, "you cannot gainsay this, for the Chinese doctors have prescribed it for thousands of years and there are no wiser people in the world than the Chinese—except we Arabs—as anyone knows."

Well, I knew the Chinese to be the biggest buyers of all kinds of seed pearls, the poorest stuff, which they called "eating pearls," and ground up for medicinal powder. I myself collected and sold many hundreds of pounds worth of seed pearls to Chinese traders in Singapore, Hong-Kong, Canton and Shanghai. I made careful inquiries in various directions, in order to find out for what particular ailment the Chinese medicos recommended the pearl powder. It appears that it is recognised as a specific against anæmia, and the largest consumers of it are presumably the pale-faced daughters of the wealthy Chinese.

I once invested in a rather big lot of American fresh-water mussel pearls—a very common variety called "slugs" by the fishers on Lake Michigan and on the White

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and Black Rivers. I couldn't get rid of these coarse goods for years until some Chinaman in Singapore, the president of a Chinese bank, made a corner in medicine pearls. A wily countryman of his who knew of my American pearl trouble (I had about 15 to 16 lb. weight of them) introduced me to the would-be cornerer and I unloaded on him at medicine prices. I believe the broker asked for two commissions. I gave him five.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OFFICE BY THE FLAME TREES

My office overlooking the plaza, with the flame trees looking in at me through the ever-open door, proved a great boon. I could watch all the world passing by ; and all the world, returning the compliment, used to stop and watch me working. Chinese coolies would set down their burdens right at my door, wipe their sweating faces, smile at me, and move on. Chino traders would put their heads in to ask for the latest mother-of-pearl quotations from London, or to show me a piece of crooked baroque I had refused to buy many times. The Chief of Police would step in to borrow a cigarette, the sergeant from the military hospital to price a small pearl he thought of sending to his young lady in Omaha, Japanese pearlers to ask for the loan of money to pay off the greedy Chinks, the Governor with a patronising air, standing half on my step and half off it to show the limits of his condescension. Good-natured native urchins, yellow, black, and brown, came to gaze. They were intensely interested in the funny white man behind the big table who sat half the day poring over a big book. Ah—and last, but not least were the ladies, the wives of the soldiers and officers of the garrison, who came in just for a change and a chat, and stood half in my office or three-quarters out.

And that was how it came about that I managed to unload those curious pearl chicks and pearl ducks which I had brought all the way from Golder's Green in London, 10,000 strong.

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These American ladies of the garrison were all keen on bargains in pearls. Of course, they never got to see any worth-while specimens, because those who deal in pearls, whether European, Chinese or native, do not exhibit their wares to all and sundry. This intrigued and annoyed them, for American women, being spoilt by their own menfolk, cannot understand that there are some things into which they are not expected to pry, and that a business man cannot afford to give free shows.

It was not long before the first American Army officer's wife confided that she was collecting pearls for a necklace, and that she was open to buy one or two on the Captain's pay-day. She did not, however, confide in me sufficiently to say whether the Captain referred to was her own man. At any rate she was a potential buyer. She had brought her pearls with her in case I should have some that matched hers. Well, when she opened the little cardboard box in which she kept her treasure, I saw before me five small pieces of baroque of as many tints as there were pieces and every one of a different geometrical shape. The worst of it was that you could not very well match hexagons with octagons. I was expected to admire, but contented myself with saying that it was rather remarkable to see that five members of one family with such divergent characteristics could lie peaceably side by side.

The Captain's lady said, "Are you pulling my leg?"

I assured her solemnly that I should never dare take such liberties.

She laughed and remarked, "You lime-juicers sure are the limit. But what did you mean by running down my poils?"

"I did not run them down," I said. "They are as good

as any of their kind, but that kind is not suitable for necklaces. They might do for dice."

Then I remembered my pearl birds. "But if you want to see something really pretty in pearls, I'll show you the dinkiest carved pearl birds."

I had half a dozen of them on pink cotton wool in a little box. She went into ecstasies over them. I offered to present her with one as a gift.

"Oh, my," she exclaimed. "The Captain wouldn't like that!"

So as I did not want to fall out with the United States Army I accepted payment for them.

Mrs. Captain went straight to her best friend and showed her the treasure. Back they both came together. Could I manage just another half dozen as a great favour? I did my best. From then onward, every day for many months, Colonel's lady, Captain's lady, Sergeant's lady, and the daughters thereof, bought pearl chicks from me, either for themselves or as presents for friends in America. By the time the demand ceased I had disposed of more than half my aviary at two pounds a dozen.

There came a keen hawk-eyed, long-nosed Syrian to the island on a skirmishing trading expedition; he was one of those fellows one meets in London or Paris offering "antique" Persian rugs for sale in front of hotels and cafés. He was out to skin anybody. Someone must have told him I was an easy mark. He came into my office straight from the steamer, and offered me snake-sticks.

"Snake-sticks?" I said. "What are they?"

"Oh," he replied, "they are snakes disembowelled, desiccated and stuffed, and then hardened by a special secret process so that each snake makes a handsome solid walking-stick."

He had eighty of these sticks, two quivers full, and wanted fifty pesos apiece. I admired them politely and regretted I could not do a really big deal with him, buying the whole lot for shipment to America.

Well, Mr. Syrian got very interested in me and wanted to know what prevented me from buying at least half a dozen to start with. I explained that I had no cash to spare. It was a pity, I added, that he was no pearl expert, because I had some exquisite pearl birds which, in the absence of ready cash, I might have been willing to trade against his snake-sticks, although, of course, they were rather valuable. I wasn't sure, on second thoughts, that it was wise to trade them at all. But as he was so keen, would he come and see me next morning, as I was too busy at the moment to go into the matter?

Even the next morning, however, I could hardly bear the thought of parting with my rarities. But in the end I was persuaded. I traded three dozen chicks against all his snake-sticks. There was not a snakeskin in the lot. The inside was a hollow steel rod, the outside a parchment material printed with a snake-skin design. That was a perfect deal.

There were many of Colonel Roosevelt's old roughriders in the islands, left over from the first wild days of the American occupation. Most of them had fallen on evil days, and the Government had decided to settle them on the land in Mindanao Island and give them a good start. Draught-animals were wanted for them. Someone had to buy them, and the Philippine Government Inspector saw no reason why the man with the office on the plaza facing the flame trees should not do as well as any other. I think he meant well by me. But it is one thing for a merchant to undertake to deliver at a price

THE OFFICE BY THE FLAME TREES

and another to buy them in, or indeed to deliver the goods at all.

As it happened, draught-animals were not to be had in Sulu because the Moros refused to part with their cattle at any price. So I sent Ong to Borneo for them. He bought forty beasts at a figure which promised to leave a profit of 100 per cent. But, poor creatures, they were a picture of misery when I went down to look them over at the dock. They had not enjoyed the sea voyage. Then the Government vet. said he would have to keep them in quarantine for two weeks at my expense. At the end of two weeks he asked me point-blank how much it was worth to me to have them certified O.K. I said, just enough to get out without a dead loss on the deal. He thought that was reasonable, and so it would have been, but that six of the animals decided to lie down and die overnight. I made up my mind to surrender the contract, but the Government threatened to enforce the penalty for non-delivery. I sent Ong again to Borneo. He bought another forty head. Two were washed overboard in a gale and the rest were so ill that they had to be sent to a nursing-home on landing. I petitioned the official in charge for release from the contract and fastened the papers together with a handsome pearl scarf-pin. My petition was granted. And henceforth I meddled no more with the cattle trade. But I would raise my hat ever after to any mud-caked vermin-infested carabao I met on the trail; for when I'm licked I know it.

At about this time Treak, the newly appointed Collector of Customs, arrived in town and was holding a reception of the local merchants and traders. He was long past his prime, and was, in fact, beginning to get a bit childish. But having served the Government long and faithfully, he

was retained in the service long after other American citizens were being turned down for full-blooded goo-goos—"the little brown brothers."

Treak was a Britisher, and when he learnt that I too was British, the only other one within hundreds of miles, his heart warmed to me. Like many a good man whose lot is cast among coloured folk, he had hitched up with a native woman. She was a vain bit of brown femininity who used an extraordinary amount of talcum and fancied that no one noticed she was not white. She lived for dress and jewellery, and eventually her extravagance caused the old man to lose his job. She had run up large accounts with the Chinese and Indian merchants, and when these store-keepers began to insist on payment the ingenious Collector of Customs put all kinds of obstructions in their way when they tried to clear their indents.

None but those who have had dealings with American Customs officials 10,000 miles away from Washington can imagine the tyranny traders in a small out-of-the-way island port are frequently subjected to. The Chinese can stand a great deal, but when the cup of bitterness overflows, they too resort to deadly concerted action; and a Chinese boycott can become a most fearsome thing.

But that by the way. It was several years before the Chinks kicked against the pricks. I was a frequent visitor at the collector's private office, where he told me all his troubles, especially those in connection with the forbidden poppy-juice.

Since the coming of the Americans, there had been added to the constant fight for dominion over the wild and unruly tribes two additional campaigns: the war against the spotted anopheles—or the malaria mosquito—and the war against dope. In the war against the mosquito, the people

had to be made to co-operate, and this necessitated teaching and propaganda. Nothing could be done by force in a matter of that kind. But in the war against opium the Government could and did take a high hand. Nearly every Chinaman on the island, and many of the well-to-do natives, were addicted to the potent drug, to such an extent, in fact, that it was considered unfair to deprive of it altogether those who had been inured to its use for many years. But such opium as was allowed to come in was under Government supervision and was strictly rationed, and issued to permit-holders only through certified channels. It produced, of course, a very satisfactory revenue.

Then the Chinese traders and the Moro ex-pirates began to engage with great zest in the profitable opium traffic, and gave the armed Customs cutters and fast steam launches patrolling the waters of the Mindoro Sea a tough job. Incidentally, several men in the employ of the Customs for the purpose of suppressing the traffic grew conveniently blind, greatly to the benefit of their banking accounts.

Most, if not all, of the smuggled opium came from British North Borneo, where it was unrestrainedly prepared, packed and sold to whoever was prepared to pay the current price. The Borneo ports were watched so closely by the Americans that you wouldn't have thought it possible to smuggle a Seidlitz powder out without their knowledge, but the traffic went gaily on. It was a duel of wits against wits, cunning against cunning, American seamanship against Moro handling of the russet sails of their frail but fast vintas, of American Navy charts against the Moros' intimate knowledge of the waters, currents, shoals, sandbanks, creeks, coves and rocks, from Sandakan in Borneo to the northernmost point in Mindanao Island.

It seemed a hopeless task, this attempted suppression of

the illegal traffic. One of the ingenious Moro devices for getting the better of the Customs cutters was shown to me by the then Collector of Customs. In a corner of his private office stood what looked like a 12-foot tree-trunk. He pointed to it and invited me to lift it. I braced myself for the effort—but I could have lifted the darned thing with my little finger.

"Cork!" I said.

"Lighter than Spanish cork," he replied. "The Moro opium-smuggler uses this to get the better of us. He puts the opium into it and several others like it somewhere off the Borneo coast. He stands to quite openly, and if a Revenue cutter looms up on the horizon he just slings them overboard, where they float unseen. When the craft is searched, nothing of course is found. The Government vessel proceeds on her way and the smugglers then fish up their 'tree-trunk' again. Even now, when we are on to this method of smuggling, one log may be spotted by our people, but there'll be, you bet, two or three floating about which they *haven't* seen. And if they only get away with one out of three, the business is still profitable to them."

I knew every Chinese trader on the island so well, by now, that I could enter their sanctums at any time of day, and I found that nearly every one of them enjoyed a few dream-pipes daily. The paraphernalia were there in the back room of each Chinaman's office: the opium divan, the lamp, the pipes, the steel needles, the little gadgets for roasting and rolling the pills. I was constantly invited to partake. More than once I have been tempted to make the experiment, but the fear of consequences has always restrained me, although I have no doubt that one may safely smoke a pipe more than once without fear of becoming a slave to the habit.

Never a day passed that the American Customs men did not make search among the pile-built houses on the mile-long Chino pier, but long before the officers set foot on the first wobbly wooden plank, the Chinaman carrying on business in the very last house at the end of the crazy lane rising out of the sea-slime and mud knew of their coming. If there was any opium about, it progressed ahead of the searchers by back doors or was let down in sealed cans through traps in the floor for safe keeping among the sea-slugs and crabs.

Every now and then, not because they could not avoid it, but just to give the customs men a chance to report a catch, they would place a few tins openly on the counter to be pounced upon by the searchers. The fine was shared by all the Chinese traders—a voluntary tribute to law and order. If a sentence to gaol was involved, some toil-wearied coolie was chosen and given a well-earned rest. To the authorities one pigtail was as good as another, so why worry?

CHAPTER XV

TOMASSEN'S CARABAO MAIL

THE island received a new Governor at this time, an ex-captain of constabulary, 6 feet 2 inches in his stockinged feet, as broad as a native weaver's loom and with a fist that could smash a 2-inch oak board. He also had a taste for pork and beans. A good-hearted fellow he was, but blunt and brusque and quite uncowed by the limp in his right foot, caused by a Moro spear, and minor cuts all over his body. These were his reward for attempting to pacify the natives.

He took no notice of me until one day, on a tour of inspection in the interior, a Moro's kris caught him fairly on the left arm. He strangled the would-be assassin with his right hand and collapsed on top of him. When he was brought to the hospital, I went to inquire after him twice a day and he began to take an interest in me.

But the Governor was fond of cards and I was not. His invitations to a game of poker were tantamount to a royal command, and I enjoyed these occasions as a man condemned to the guillotine enjoys the haircut that proceeds the carving of his neck ; for I was not the only duffer at bluffing, and the Governor's misguided bluffs meant that his ledger accounts with me showed too many debit entries.

He was anxious to do the right thing by the natives and to establish good-will and peace on the island, though he had the American's disdain for a coloured skin. He spoke of the Sultan as " That squint-eyed rice-eating son of a gun,"

and on more than one occasion was distinctly rude to that potentate. But when speaking to me, knowing that I was a bit of a stickler for manners, good form and mode of expression, he made great efforts to please and in many other ways showed me kindness and courtesy. I always felt, when I came into his presence, as though a wild hippopotamus had of a sudden turned docile.

In his desire to improve conditions on the island the Governor had come to the conclusion that a network of good roads would not only facilitate the intercourse of the coast people with the people in the hills, but would also, by improving trading conditions generally, have a pacifying effect.

"If," he said to me one day, "you really want to be a pioneer, I have a proposition for you. We are pushing on with the roads as fast as we can, but roads without a modern haulage system or trading stations here and there are no good. If you'll run a couple of motor trucks and open a trading station somewhere half-way across the island I'll back you with a concession, and no Chinaman shall be allowed to open a store in competition within a few miles of you."

I saw visions, such visions as I had when I was a boy. To be a pioneer! I said it was a go. For a start I engaged a Dane, an ex-soldier and ex-pack-train man, an honest chap, afraid of nothing. He was to run the store for me and be my representative generally. As he was out of a job he jumped at the offer, and set out the very next day with three carts I had bought from the Government stores and six carabaos I had hastily recruited at top prices, laden with timber and tools for the new store.

Tomassen had already chosen the spot (he had a keen eye for locations), midway between Jolo and Mayunbung,

the Sultan's ancient capital on the opposite coast. Indanan was the name of the place and it also happened to be the headquarters of the Moro Constabulary in that district. On the third day after he had set out, Tomassen sent word that the building was finished, rafters and all.

That needs some explanation. It is the hospitable practice of the natives throughout the Archipelago to lend the newcomer a hand with the building of his new home, and the Moros, having received a hint from their dato panglima, or chief, that the Government greatly favoured my enterprise, came from all round to give Tomassen their assistance. Although I offered to pay for the labour, the Moros would not hear of it. But they gladly accepted my gifts of rice which I asked Tomassen to distribute amongst them.

The next move was to stock the store with trade goods which were in most demand. By the end of the week I could boast, like Whiteley's, that anything from an anchor to a needle and from a pianola to a feather boa was obtainable in my Emporium, that is, metaphorically speaking ! At any rate, there was rice, and rice, and rice : three grades of rice made from one by Tomassen, who was no fool. He divided the contents of a sack in three and charged three prices. There were sarongs made by Swiss looms, coloured handkerchiefs, cotton singlets, bales of cotton print, silver bangles, coral amulets, combs, mouth-organs, pins, needles, thread, bales of old newspaper for wrapping, mosquito mesh, white calico, hand mirrors, boiled sweets, cigarette paper, fluffy evil-smelling Borneo tobacco and packets of Woodbines, a bottle or two of Eno's and three bottles of mixed pickles as well as the cheapest tinned salmon and sardines.

My carabao train moved back and forth over the lonely

trail for three days and nights, carrying supplies. The Chino traders in town bit their fingers and thought it was unfair that they should be shut out.

But the Moros had little or no money. Therefore it was barter, barter, barter, the livelong day. Tomassen did well for an ex-soldier and ex-pack-train man. Within a week or so he had prepared for himself a complete schedule of barter values. Three bananas equalled two safety pins, a small can of sardines equalled a pound of beeswax, a red head of Dutch cheese equalled half a picul of abacca, a packet of Woodbines, a hand mirror and two big nails ten coconuts, and so forth in endless combinations—six foolscap sheets written in a scrawled schoolboy hand. Tomassen had method. He served behind the long trestle table which did duty for counter and was supported by two Filipino boys and one old Chino—all of them with guns strapped to their sides, for I had had to give them arms and the permits to carry them before any of them would consent to enter upon their duties.

Everything went well, our sales increased marvellously. Sometimes, indeed, some lines were quite sold out. My carabao train came in once a day and stopped in front of my office on the plaza laden with the products of the country, all of which we had had to take in exchange for our goods. At the end of six weeks I proposed to go out myself to see what I had created. But I was told it was not wise for me to go because the Moros were still in a state of great agitation and had not quite settled down since their last fight. Moreover, numbers of would-be amoks were reported to be lying in wait for white skins.

Now I had received considerable hospitality from the Governor as well as from various other Government officials. I decided to entertain them to an outing, since I

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had no house of my own. And I made arrangements for a wild-pig hunt and sent out invitations to some sixty of my friends. Tomassen fixed up everything very nicely, because oddly enough I had arranged for the hunt to take place within easy reach of my store. I should thus have an opportunity both to show the officials what I had so far accomplished and also to see for myself what my store and the conditions of trade were like.

Well, we all set out one Friday morning, some on horseback, some on foot, all armed but myself, who, throughout the years of my stay on the island, never carried a firearm. We were preceded by my carabao train of three carts and six slow-moving hefty mud-buffaloes laden with many cases of beer, ginger-pop, lemonade, two cases of whisky with soda to match, 2,000 eggs, bacon and ham by the flitch, hundreds of loaves of bread and cans of salmon, sardines and pork and beans : provision for sixty hungry men for two days and something to spare. It was the biggest party I ever gave.

We arrived at Indanan late on the Friday afternoon. The store was all I had expected of it and was ideally located. After a cursory look round I went out to look about me. Squatting in the fork of a tree I saw a female monkey cuddling her infant. The officer who was with me said, " Watch me get that pair," and pulled his gun. The old monkey, as though she had understood, grabbed her youngster and hugged it close, giving us such a beseeching look that even the thoughtless young officer understood her appeal and dropped his arm. The monkey recognised her chance and leapt for a higher branch and as she climbed higher and higher she turned ever and again to see what we were doing. I never saw a more human look in any animal's eye. It is one thing to see monkeys captive in a zoological

garden and quite another to meet them like equals, as it were, on their own ground.

The beaters now announced that all was ready for the great hunt. But the Governor thought he would rather sit down to some pork and beans. Well, the Governor's word was law and every mother's son immediately pleaded for a can too. We sat down to as jolly a meal as one could imagine. When the smokes were lit and everyone was comfortably full, the Governor thought there was more fun in a little game of poker just then than there would be in pig-sticking. Again everybody agreed with him. The beaters were paid off and went home, and so did the wild pigs.

"I have altered nothing more in your arrangements for our entertainment than one letter," said the Governor to me.

"How's that?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, "it was to be a game of porker, and now it is a game of poker!"

Everyone laughed dutifully and the cards were brought out. But when we got back to the citadel two days later no one let on that we had spent the whole time guzzling and playing poker.

That was the only time I ever saw my pioneer trading-station. Almost a month to the day after this outing Tomassen sent me an urgent message to expect him, his Filipinos, the Chino, the carts and the carabaos, the rice and the cloth and everything else for which he was responsible, in the very near future. What had happened? I wondered. Was Tomassen tired of store-keeping? What right had he to abandon his post? I got a few men together hastily and started off indignantly to Indanan Camp. But I had not gone far along the trail when my carabao train hove in sight.

"What the devil is the meaning of all this?" I said to Tomassen as he came towards me with a grin on his bronzed face. "And how is it that you are already here when it should have taken you another two hours to cover the distance with these slow animals?"

"Well, sir," he said, "to answer your last question first—I turned the carabao mail into an express train by tying bundles of dried straw to their tails and setting them alight. Gee, what a ride we had! The first person I've seen since leaving the store four hours ago is you."

"Yes, but what's it all about?" I demanded.

"First thing this morning some friendly Moros I'd done a good turn to sent me word to clear out in time as it was on the cards that someone was out to chop off our heads and burn down the store. I thought it was better not to wait and see. Anyway, I bet the store's a cinder by now!"

And so ended my store-keeping experience amongst the Moros on the Island of Sulu.

Before long the first motor truck I had ordered arrived. An ex-soldier applied for the job of chauffeur. He said he knew all about driving and odd repairs, and from all accounts he was a good man. So I entrusted the expensive truck to his care. Tomassen volunteered to go on her too into the interior, wherever roads permitted her passage, and buy produce for ready cash. I had intended the truck originally for use in connection with the store, but there was now no store and I could not afford to keep her idle.

But the experiment was not a success. The natives had been so long used to barter that they considered an offer in cash for their produce a mere effort to get the better of them. Walton the driver turned out to be a booze-fighter. He put my truck woefully out of commission by neglect and then bargained for extra money to put her right again.

He messed on for a few weeks and then told me he needed some spare parts for which I'd have to send to Singapore. I sent for them, but the dealers were out of stock and asked whether they were to send to England for them. I cabled a rush message, "Send to the moon if you can't get them nearer!" They arrived in about eight weeks' time.

But before they arrived there was a crisis in my affairs. One day Walton, liquored up to the gills, rushed into my office shouting and swearing, and told me I'd have to pay him for the twelve weeks or so he had been kept waiting for the parts or—and then he pulled his gun on me.

I was in my office alone, as it happened, and it would have been fatal to shout for help. But here was an infuriated wild beast; the look in the man's eye was sufficient to tell me that he had gone out of his mind. It was past mid-day and everyone in town had already gone home to dinner. There was little chance of anyone crossing the plaza at that time. Yet my luck held. The unexpected happened. An American pearler from Mindanao, who had just come ashore and was passing my office, looked in at the open door and took in the situation at a glance. He seized the fellow's arms from behind and made him drop the gun. I asked for the man's deportation after that. He was shipped out, and a few weeks later he had to be taken to the mad-house.

At this time the amok-runners were again getting so bad that no one who hadn't very pressing business would go out of the city gates. One day an American officer and his wife and children went for a short stroll almost within sight of the citadel walls and within call of the sentry at the gate. A juramentado came hop-sway-dancing along and slish—took off the officer's head, as you might cut a cabbage from its stalk, and slash—went an arm and half his trunk

ere the head rolled upon the ground. The amok ran on towards the market, leaving the poor woman bewildered and the children staring at what had just been their father.

The Government decided that something drastic had to be done. But what measures can be taken against madmen? The officials pondered deep and long. Then someone had an inspiration. The next amok-runner, after being killed, was to be sewn into a gunny-sack together with a whole pig and dropped over the sea wall. The Moros, being Mahomedans, dreaded nothing more than such contamination, which would prevent them for evermore from entering the gates of Paradise, since Allah abhorred the swine as he loathed the infidel.

Well the next amok got it in the neck, if one can put it that way. They had riddled him with bullets, had clubbed him with hard wooden sticks as he ran, had pierced his side with a boat-hook so that his guts trailed behind and entangled his feet. When he dropped, and before he grew cold, they grabbed the handiest innocent porker, stuck it, and made the two of them keep each other company in a big stone-weighted sack. It was sewn up by willing hands and then over it went into the sea.

Many Moros who had witnessed the scene were more horror-struck at this than at the five murders the fellow had committed. But the story spread, and for weeks after no Moro had any stomach for amok-running.

I asked, "How can these fellows stand such a lot of punishment? They keep running and slashing and killing after having received several apparently mortal wounds."

The answer was this: they tie their arteries up in such a way that the loss of blood is comparatively small from any one wound; they also bind their testes so tight that

the pain maddens them and goads them to kill and kill until they themselves are killed. They believe that the more men they kill the greater the number of slaves they will have to serve them in the beyond ; but women and children they spare, for there is no merit in killing these.

After a short respite the amok epidemic spread again. The pig stunt seemed to have lost its terror for the time being. One day the Government agents learned that some prospective amoks had been washed and shaved and prepared the night before by their Imams, and had in a manner been absolved of their intent. The Governor therefore sent to the Sultan a strong reprimand, and told him he held him responsible for any further killings, since he was the head of the Mahomedan Faith in these islands.

But the wily Sultan sent his compliments to the Governor and submitted that madmen do not give any warning of their actions, and that if amoks were a trouble to the Government they were likewise a sore worry to him.

The next amok came into the citadel. He was unlucky and only got one head—that of an unfortunate Chinese coolie who couldn't drop his burden fast enough to run.

The Governor determined to play the Sultan's own game. He sent the Revenue cutter up round the coast to Mayunbung, the Sultan's capital, with orders to start shooting at the palace, at the Sultan's houses, and at everything else in range, and to keep shooting until they should receive fresh instructions from Washington.

The Sultan had no telegraph, and the constabulary post on that side of the island were so busy on the telephone line to the Governor's house that the Sultan could not get in touch with anyone in authority. He was frantic as he watched the effect of the cutter's bombardment, and soon he sent a messenger on his fastest racing-pony across the

island with the news that something had gone wrong with the Customs boat and would the Governor stop the mad shooting at once ?

Back went the messenger on his exhausted pony with the reply. The Governor presented his compliments, but the Customs boat had most unfortunately run amok and, as was the manner of amoks, had not given notice of its intention. However, now that the Governor knew of its actions he would look carefully into the matter and would send for further advice to Washington.

The Sultan took that hint.

When he had recovered from his scare, His Highness went to the moving pictures in the city, whether to learn a new cowboy stunt or American drawing-room manners no one knew. However it was, I saw his secretary buying the tickets for his master, and for his twenty-three wives, who followed Jamalal Kiram II. into the best seats in single file.

The day after that, comforted and soothed no doubt, he intimated to me that he was open to sell some pearls for ready cash. He had made up his mind to seek a change of air in his ancestors' dominions in British North Borneo and Brunei, and also collect the quarterly pension the Borneo Company still paid him under the agreement by which these ancestors had ceded their territorial rights.

He came to see me at my private rooms, with ten of his suite : one to carry his umbrella, one his pocket handkerchief, a third his betel-nut outfit, a fourth the pearls in a blue velvet bag, a fifth the box to hold the cash in case of a sale—and so forth. I treated them all to Manila beer and discoursed long with the prince. We differed greatly on our ideas of the worth of the pearls ; but he needed the change of air ! The man with the cash-box had something

to put in it when the retinue took leave of me. This was my second deal with the Sultan, and I had thought that he had left me highly disgruntled with the terms. But next morning, on my usual constitutional through Tulay, on passing opposite the palace I heard myself called by name. I looked up. There at the window of his bathroom stood Jamalal Kiram II., a naked prince, waving his hand in friendly greeting. I raised my hat and bowed, and went on my way to the Chino pier.

CHAPTER XVI

"JURAMENTADO I"

I WAS longing for fresh conquests, and it only required the slightest suggestion to make me embark on some new enterprise about which I might understand nothing. One day I was told by Charlie Schuck that certain shares of the Sulu Lumber Company, Inc., held mainly by Army officers who had once been stationed in the island but were now back in the States, were on the market much below par. The company held a cutting concession over good hardwood timber lands on the island group of Pangutarang. The woods were Ypil and Yakal, much esteemed for railway sleepers, and contracts from the Cebu and Manila railway companies for large regular supplies were in the company's hands. I investigated, was attracted, made many calculations, bought the Army officers out, and already saw myself sitting at the head of an imposing board of directors.

But there were a few trifling snags. My co-directors all had different views; no two thought alike. The manager in the field—Charlie himself—was sometimes on the job and sometimes had private business of his own. Time after time the axes and tools we bought and sent out went astray. The labour was at one time willing but scarce and at other times plentiful but unfriendly. Frequently the wild boars on the islands made themselves a real nuisance, and when wild animals were not threatening it was sure to be Ramadan—the time when all good Mahomedans fast for a month and have no use for work. When we had accumu-

lated a goodly pile of sleepers the Manila Railway Company notified us that unless it had a batch of 20,000 at a time they would not charter a steamer. Ten thousand was all the company could muster for the cash in hand, so months went by when we had to keep paid men on the beach to watch our property and grew poorer every day. Finally we accepted a bid from a Chinaman who needed them for fencing posts, but the company, while it had kept its head, had lost its tail. There came a statement from the company's bank in Manila: 3,000 pesos less on balance than there should have been. I called the treasurer and put unpleasant questions. He, an American ex-soldier and shyster lawyer, told me plump to go to hell. Did I think, because I was chairman, that I had a right to “inquisite”? He was treasurer, true, and the money ought to be there, but the law did not say it had to be kept in the bank! It was in his pocket and there it would stay. It did not stay. I saw to that. But my action broke the company for good.

The Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. I was licking my wounds over that venture when Noomy came as advance agent for Billy Bunn, the American-born Chinese aviator. They had been giving flying exhibitions in Manila with great success, had made piles of money and spent it all (as was proper, there being more where the other had come from!). But things had panned out a bit differently from expectations. Their machine had crashed and they had ordered another, which had just arrived from the States C.O.D. But when they had tried to raise the money for it they found that the Manila folk had lost interest in aeroplanes, so they had begun to tour the islands to see whether there was anyone with vision and guts to pay for the new machine which the Shipping Company still held.

I would allow no one to question my vision, and as for the rest—well, they seemed to be in the right place. I said, "Noomy, I'll pay the dues, the machine to remain my security till I am repaid, and fifty-fifty as to profits."

He kicked and said I was awfully hard. Privately I agreed, for I wouldn't have gone up in the machine myself for ten times the money I hoped to make. But I had to recover the lost tail of that Lumber Company.

Finally Noomy cabled to his partner and gave him my terms. He replied the same day, "Accept and tell him to go to hell."

We fixed upon the date for the flying performance over the island and issued printed leaflets in Chinese and Moro. Then we asked the leading Chinese and native chiefs to sell the tickets for us—two pesos for the first-row seats, one peso for the second row and half a peso for "standing" seats anywhere in the citadel. The funny thing was that it entered no Chino's or Moro's head that they could see the whole entertainment aloft without paying a cent.

Fortunately for us, no one in the islands had ever seen an aeroplane and didn't exactly know what was going to happen. So everybody paid up and lived in great expectations for a month. In the meantime the aviator fell ill, something went wrong with his 'plane—with his engine—anyhow, he was woefully delayed. The Chinese capitans and the Moro headmen who had sold the tickets and turned over the money to me advised me that they were having great bother with the subscribers, and that unless the stunt came off pretty quick there would be an insurrection and I would be the first to go to bed headless.

But at long last the machine and the aviator arrived. It

seemed to me that the whole population of the island turned out to greet it. We made all who had no tickets pay as they came through the gates into the citadel. I asked one of the Moros afterwards what he thought of it all. His reply was characteristic of the native in almost any part of the globe. He said, “ The white man can do anything,” as much as to say, “ What is there to be excited about ? ”

The box-office returns were wonderfully good, and made up in great measure for the lumber fiasco. But the next day, to balance accounts, I got a good scare. An hour before sunset as usual I had gone down to the lighthouse for a dip in the sea. I was a little later than on most evenings and so came back alone, clad in my bathing drawers and with a bath towel slung over my shoulders. Suddenly I heard shouting in the distance, saw people running hither and thither, and as I came nearer heard the banging and slamming of doors and the wild cry of “ Juramentado ! Juramentado ! ”

I knew what that meant. An amok was loose in the citadel. By now all doors were barred and I the only man in the streets. I looked quickly for some hole or corner that might hide me. I ran like one possessed up the street, although no one was in sight. I knocked frenziedly, here at a door and there at a window, begging admittance from those who stood behind those doors and windows. I received no reply. Everyone seemed scared stiff and took not the slightest notice of my appeals for help. By the time I had arrived at my own place the scare was over, because after all no amok had appeared on the scene. One door after another was opened gingerly. Here a head was poked out and there a nose. A minute later everything was going on as usual. Along came the Colonel's wife

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When I come to think of it, I did not see many maimed amongst the island folk either, and only once a blind man. I have every reason to remember this blind man. One day, report having been brought to me that a certain Moro naked diver had found a prize pearl, I went with Sayid to look up this native in his own lair. He lived in a ramshackle bamboo house built on the usual piles in the mangrove swamp. The "street" by which I approached this mansion was nothing more than a long line of swaying, half-rotten wood planks. If you missed your footing you fell into the swamp and got stuck up to your armpits—if you were lucky. If you did not drop off, you went bobbing up and down along these frightfully sagging planks.

Sayid, eager to lead and accustomed to that sort of progress, walked ahead very rapidly. I followed gingerly behind and presently was overcome by giddiness. I could neither advance nor retreat and was as helpless as a child. Then a native came towards me and held out his hand, which I grabbed, allowing myself to be led to the house at the end of the boardwalk.

When I entered the house I looked at the man who had helped me and saw that he was stone blind.

When I said that I had not met with many maimed Moros I meant those crippled from birth or by disease. I saw quite a number, though, who had lost an arm or a hand or a leg through an encounter with sharks or crocodiles. But these monsters seemed to have less terrors for them than for any white man; probably because those who were exposed to such attacks were familiar with the thought that some day they might meet with such an end—much as a Londoner knows that a motor bus may settle him any day.

Talking of the creatures that infest the tropical rivers and seas, I am reminded of Shorty (I never knew him by

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any other name), who told me of his most extraordinary experience with a devil-fish. If I were to repeat it verbatim I might surpass Victor Hugo's account of a similar incident. But Shorty was a great character. His name, of course, was on account of his height. Four feet six? Four feet four is probably nearer the mark. A squeaky voice, a bad temper, a practical joker of the most pronounced kind, no respecter of persons or of anything on the earth or above the clouds—that was Shorty. What had brought him to the island? Fish. Not the fish in the waters round *our* island, but in the water around other islands further south.

The fools of Filipinos and Moros have the finest fish in their seas, and in such plenty and of so many kinds that they might well be the envy of every fish-eating people. Yet, because they are lazy, bereft of enterprise without someone to lead and organise them, they are content to pay millions of pesos a year for tinned salmon and sardines to give a flavour to their rice.

Shorty had heard in Manila of these waters which were so particularly rich in fish, and as he was a professional pickler, smoker and curer of anything that wears scale or fin he saw great possibilities for himself. All he lacked was capital. The office on the plaza facing the flame trees was his goal when he set out from Manila. My fame as a mug must indeed have travelled far.

I listened to Shorty. It is always a dangerous thing to listen; that's why the really big men in the city have others to listen for them—cold-blooded, unimaginative clerks or uniformed men at the door. But I had no white clerk or commissionaire and had to do my own listening.

Shorty made me quite enthusiastic. I would lead the way and show the natives that there was plenty of grub at their very doors and no need to bring it from the Alaskan

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coast or from the waters of Sicily. Shorty's requirements were nothing out of the way. So much wood planking, corrugated iron, nails, bamboo-poles for his drying and curing sheds. So much sawdust of a certain kind, so many baskets and boxes and bags, so many piculs of dry sea-salt—all these to be frequently renewed—lots of rice for trading against the fish the natives would be glad to bring and a very little hard cash in silver coins of small denomination.

It is no use listening to a man unless you do as he bids you, and as I never do things by halves, Shorty was as good as provided with all he needed when he first caught my ear.

While Shorty was waiting for the first steam-launch going to the southernmost islands, he amused himself and me and others with practical jokes. One day he was walking in my company past the native market in Tulay outside the walls. There was a great bustle as usual in the market that day, but sitting apart from the crowd we noticed a husky Moro with his back against a pile of broken stones and two big native baskets filled to the brim with eggs.

Shorty walked up to him and priced them. "*Dos centavos cada uno*," said the Moro in broken Spanish—"Two cents apiece." Shorty asked if he could pick. The Moro agreed; they were all the same price. So Shorty handled several, examining them critically, holding them to his ear and so forth; at last he picked one and handed the Moro two centavos. He broke it before the Moro's eyes and drew out an American five-dollar gold piece. The Moro looked astonished. Still, when Shorty asked, could he pick another, the man consented. Once more Shorty went through the same performance, and took

out of the shell in full sight of the native yet another gold coin.

Now the Moro was thoroughly aroused, and would sell no more of his eggs. He withdrew behind the stone pile with his two baskets and began to crack eggs. Shorty and I moved on. Hours later when I was passing that way again that poor Moro was sitting in a pool of yolks, still cracking his eggs. But that afternoon Shorty was told that an angry Moro was looking for him. So he stayed indoors for some days after that, nursing a cold—in his feet.

Before Shorty left on his trip south the question arose, how to dispose of the quantities of dried, smoked and cured fish he was going to make. "I'll consign them to you, of course," he said. "I can dry and smoke and cure and pickle them all right, but I am no fishmonger and you'll have to see to the marketing end."

I called my man Ong and consulted with him. "If they're the right goods," said Ong, "you'll have a big market, there's no doubt. The thousands of Moros and Japs in the abacca fields of Davao will take nearly all you can ship them, and there isn't a township on Mindanao, Bohol, Panay or even Mindoro but will be glad of the fish. The Manila markets too can never get enough."

Well, that was very satisfactory, but now arose the question of storage, because the arrival of Shorty's consignments once a week could never be expected to coincide with the scheduled sailings of the inter-island boats. Already I had found the go-down at the back of my office too small for the goods I was handling: mother-of-pearl, trocas and window-shell. There was no other go-down to be had for love or money, nor was there any land at all to be had for building within the citadel or outside the wall and close enough to be convenient.

In overflow weeks, however, when there was abundance of shell brought in by the pearling boats and my buying was consequently heavy, I stored part of my goods in the rambling arched vaults of the Catholic Church. Father McDonaugh, S.J., a good and noble soul, knew my needs and I knew his. He didn't mind the clatter and noise (the vaults were right below his study and sleeping quarters), and the rental I paid allowed him to take three meals a day instead of only one two or three times a week. He was very poor, good man, and his cure only a handful of equally poor Filipinos, for to my knowledge no Moro was ever converted by him or his predecessors. I now had to speak to the Father, and mention that in addition to shell I should in future also store dried fish in the vaults. The good man said it was considerate of me to mention this, that he was pleased to hear my business was expanding, and that he wished me well. I insisted that he should accept an increased rental of so much per month, but he would not hear of it. He was already well paid and his needs were small.

When Shorty's first consignment arrived, the white people in town thought both the dried and smoked kind were too good for the common taos. Indeed, they were delicious eating, but the padre in his bedroom above the vault didn't sleep a wink that night nor for six succeeding nights till the fish was taken away on the *Fernandez-Hermanos*. He then breathed sweet air again, but an unholy odour pervaded the church ever after, and no amount of holy water and incense could remove it.

But the good padre stuck to his bargain manfully and said not a word, though he looked worried enough. The reports from my agents concerning the sales of fish were most promising and the second consignment was bigger

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and better still, but Shorty was beginning to have trouble with the native labour—while I myself was facing from day to day a more and more haggard and harassed padre. At last he could stick it no longer. He came to me one day and offered to pay me half his small stipend if only I would grant him relief. But relief was in sight when the next consignment arrived—the third and last. It consisted of one case only and held Shorty's trunk and head. This was the Moro way of settling a wage dispute.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SHADY CREW

THE Japanese divers of the Jap-owned luggers had for months been prospecting and had been fortunate enough to locate new pearl oyster beds which yielded large quantities of well-matured silver-lipped sound shell, and also exquisite pearls of more than average size. The Filipino and Moro divers on boats owned by non-Japanese followed their lead, to their great disgust ; but the seas are free and the sea-bottom too, so the Japs could do nothing but work as fast as the divers could descend and come up.

These new finds and the high price of shell in the home markets, together with the fact that the waters had been rid of the pirates, meant that now really big money was daily being paid for pearls and that everyone on the island who was able began to take a practical interest in the industry.

Some of the larger native craft were being converted by the Moros into pearling boats equipped with diving gear ; the Sultan, his prime minister, the prime minister's son and several other notables now owned and ran boats for profit. Several American Government officials likewise financed a boat or two, and the Chinese traders backed any Japanese diver who was willing to break away from his own people. All this was to the good, because the more luggers sailed out the greater the area of sea bottom which could be prospected, and the greater the quantity of shell and pearls which would come on the local market.

The Sulu pearling grounds have, I believe, a great advan-

tage over most pearling grounds in other waters—such as, for instance, in the Gulf of Manaar in Ceylon or in Panama and Venezuela—where the beds after a certain time get cleaned out of mature shell and have to be given a spell of two or three years to allow them to recover. In Sulu waters and in the Mindoro Sea generally the ever-changing subaquatic currents cover the oyster beds with mud and sand and uncover them again at intervals of years. This is in addition to those seasonable gales and storms which visit every sea and leave their mark on the ocean bed no less than on the coast-line. No protection of the beds by human agency is therefore required. The invisible oysters cannot be reached by the diver.

At the time I am speaking of the second inquiry into the problem of protecting the oyster beds in Sulu waters against undue exploitation was being held by the Philippine Islands Bureau of Fisheries, and the learned professor at the head of the Commission consulted me with reference to some aspects of the pearling industry about which at that particular period I was probably better informed than anyone else on the island. No Customs returns for the pearl catch were compulsory, nor could they have been enforced, and the authorities were entirely in the dark as to the annual value of pearls fished in the Sulu Sea. As I was not only the biggest buyer of pearls, but was in one way or another offered for purchase nearly everything of the kind that was brought in, and moreover kept notes of what I had seen or bought, I was in a fairly good position to give the desired information. In other respects, too, I was able to make suggestions that were eventually adopted.

I was already operating two luggers, but these barely paid expenses. The supercargo on the *Hetty*, one of my boats, was a Filipino named Florian. He was a flowery

specimen. He and the two divers did me right and left, even selling part of my shell catch to owners of other luggers and transferring it in some creek before they came into port. What could I suspect, then, about my pearls which are so small and easily concealed? I never got more than seed-pearls and a small piece of baroque now and then from her. With the second boat, the *Martha*, I was no luckier. In fact, she was even worse as an investment!

What a mug's game pearling is for one who cannot go out himself in his one boat and supervise the work, and see that he gets all there is coming to him! But the game also had its comic aspect. This is the kind of thing that invariably happens before sailing day:

The day before the boats are due to sail the supercargo turns up at the office with one or two of the crew. I have to leave everything and attend to him. He wants many things and presents his list; new lengths of rubber hose, a few screws and bolts, a face-glass or two for the diver's helmet, new thick woollen underwear, the others having been washed overboard when hung up to dry in the sun. He also wants tucker money for greens and live chickens and the sack and a half of rice I allowed for the trip.

Off he goes with his laden satellites, and back he comes almost before he has got out of the door. He has forgotten something. Twice—three times—or more—he forgets something and returns for it just as I am settling down to something else. Later in the day he turns up again with the whole of the crew and two crowing cocks. They all line up in front of the office and jabber Malay, Tagalog and Moro (because of any nine men there are never more than three of any one nationality on the lugger). The men want their money, naturally enough in advance, for they are leaving wives and children on shore. They want it in

small silver to make it look a lot. Each signs the book for what he has received or makes his mark, and then they all move off together. But they do not go far before they are back again to ask a favour—some last request. But at last I think I am shot of them and settle down to my books. In a moment the supercargo comes back nursing a cock under his arm. He has forgotten to ask for money for pump and lamp oil. I give him that, and then he wants the two ship's rifles and a handful of cartridges which are kept by Government regulations at the office when the lugger is in port. At last I get rid of him, and at sunrise next morning I think of my boat, fondly imagining her as she drops down with the tide.

On that morrow, however, when I am still in bed, the house-boy comes and says in my sleepy ear, "Tuan, Tuan, the supercargo of your boat is outside and must see you at once!"

I rise and call him in. "What's the matter? Why haven't you sailed, Florian?"

"Well, señor, it is this way. The number one diver is sick, the number two diver got drunk, and only half of the crew are on board. Can you give me ten pesos more as advance; I have to pay my rent?"

I can't refuse the ten pesos, even if I use unholy language as I present it, and tell him what I am going to do to half the crew, to the drunken diver and the sick one, and to him too.

The next day I rise early and see them safely off myself. There has only been one day's delay; one day gone out of twelve in which they can work on account of the neap tides, so what does it matter? The big pearl that will surely come will pay for all the trouble.

I sit in my office in cotton singlet and pants, the sweat

pouring from me. I have barely strength to chase the mosquitoes which are trying to settle on my brow and nose. In a moment of respite I doze off in the overpowering heat of the early afternoon, which is aggravated by the tin roof over my head. Suddenly I am subconsciously aware of someone near me. I open my eyes. There stand half a dozen native women in scant, dragged costumes, shame-faced, timid, with some naked children on their hips. I ask what they want and find that they are my crew's wives and children and have been left without a cent. They look to me for rice. What can I do? I'm the wealthy pearler, and their husbands are risking their lives to bring me treasure. At any rate they are hungry women and children and I can't let them starve.

Twelve days and nights pass quickly. The boats are in port again. "What luck, Florian?"

"Not so bad, señor," he says. "Two piculs of shell and some pearls."

He should have brought six piculs of shell. But perhaps the pearls——? But the tin box he hands over holds ten shillings worth of seeds. Before I have time to recover, he tells me he has lost one of the rifles and the anchor. Now the fine for the loss of a rifle is only 500 pesos. Can you figure out quickly how much profit I made out of the *Hetty* that trip?

One day when I was passing the calaboose I was horrified. Behind the wire-mesh wall sat a frantically screaming demented young man whom I knew. He was a Filipino Mestizo, the half-breed son of a Spaniard in a good position in the town. The young fellow had been a bit of a scallywag, a hard worker and fairly sober, but devoted to the cock-pit and uncommonly fond of the native ladies. Everyone liked him for his generosity, which he carried off

in fine hidalgo style. But one day they discovered that he had contracted leprosy. He knew the consequence—sequestration for life on Culion Island among the lepers; and when the authorities got to know of his misfortune and sent for him he would not go, but fled into the hills.

The Moro Constabulary hunted him from one end of the island to the other, and he had just been brought in when I saw him. It was one of the saddest sights I have ever seen.

The judge of the Philippine High Court had arrived on circuit from Manila to try a whole list of civil and criminal cases. I went to the court-house to hear and see, for it was one of the events of our year. Everybody was there, from the Governor to the smallest trading Chink.

They were trying Dato Indanan, the Moro chief, after whom my one-time inland store had been named. He was a big, square-shouldered, well set up Moro with the proudest bearing I remember of any native. He was manacled, but looked haughtily round him and at Governor, judge, lawyers and witnesses as though *he* were trying *them*. I thought I could read in his eyes what he might do if ever he got free and held them in his power.

He was accused of having put to death a native on his land. His defence was that he was master over life and death of his own followers and that the man had deserved death. The lawyer who defended him, as it happened, was that self-same ex-soldier and correspondence-school lawyer who had been treasurer of my lumber company. Such a defence was not very promising. The dato was sentenced to death, but later this was commuted to hard labour in San Remon on Mindanao Island. There he worked for some years on the plantations and became a trusty. And at last, because the Government thought he might help pacify the Moros on Jolo whom he had formerly led in

many battles against the Americans, they released him. He behaved himself for a while, and then went on the war-path again. He had acquired no love for the Americans in San Remon prison.

I am not sure whether it was during this trial or another similar to it that the Governor who was present rose and interrupted the trial, requesting the presiding judge there and then to order the arrest of one Hadji Ousman who was also present in court as a spectator. It appeared that the Hadji had been given a batch of 5,000 receipts of one peso each by the Government, to collect head-taxes from Moros in widely scattered islands in the Sulu Sea. He had undertaken the task to please the Governor and without pay or rake-off for himself. But a long time had elapsed and he had, in spite of several requests, not turned in the money to the treasurer. His excuse was that he had handed those receipts for collection to the panglimas and chiefs on those islands, but had been let down by them.

The judge issued a warrant of arrest on the spot, and fixed bail at 5,000 pesos. Was there anyone present to go bail? The hadji, a big burly fellow with a gorgeous turban that made him look like Mahomet's first cousin, stood up and looked around at the densely packed hall. He was one of the chiefs of congregation, a hadji, an imam, a holy man whose hand was kissed by every Moro he met on the trail. Was there no one to go bail for him, must he go to prison?

Then someone at the back of the hall, whose voice I thought I knew, sang out, "I will go bail for this man, and if my word is not good I will deposit the money right now."

Like everyone else, I turned round to look at the speaker, and saw that he was my own brother.

"Why did you do such a foolish thing?" I asked him as we went out of the court-house. "You have only been

here a few weeks and you don't know the man or anything about him. He may—no, he *will*—skip, and you will be done out of all that money.”

“Well,” said my brother, “what is done is done. I spoke on impulse, seeing the man's distress and not a soul in that big hall to speak for him. Anyhow, he was the first man when I came off the boat to greet me with a ‘Salaam Aleikum.’”

“And a costly ‘Salaam Aleikum’ it will be,” I grumbled.

But as we neared my office on the plaza the branches of the flame trees were strangely stirred ; for though there was not a breath of wind, they bent low and bowed to my brother.

CHAPTER XIX

FINANCING A WAR

Is there romance in pearls? Not at all. There is romance incidental to the getting of them, but no more, I suppose, than in the trading of elephants' tusks, of turtles' backs, of caymans' skins, of musk, or in the digging for sapphires, opals and gold.

The pearling fleet proper of Jolo at that time consisted of some twenty boats; that is, counting only those that were equipped with up-to-date diving gear. Modern diving gear, by the way, includes the air pump, rubber hose in suitably sectioned lengths with couplings, the diver's rubber dress to which is fitted a brass corselet to protect chest and back, a brass helmet with thick wire-barred windows, the lead-soled boots, the metal weights for front and back, and the coil of life or signal line.

The craft were small: one-masted luggers of shallow draught, 20 odd feet in length and 6 to 7 in beam, with one cabin below the companion hatch for the supercargo and diver. The crew were nine, as I have said elsewhere. The pay was the pay of the craft.

The Moros held that these Westernised craft were interlopers and were stealing the bread out of their mouths, since Allah had specially created the pearl shell for the Faithful of Sulu and had breathed pearls into them as a reward for their devoutness. This attitude had caused trouble in the time of the Spaniards, and later on the coming of the United States flag. Treaties were therefore drawn up—without the oysters' leave! As the law now

stood, only Moros and Americans had the right to dive for pearl shell. When the law had been in the making the Moros had known that no Americano could dive in eighteen fathoms of ocean and live, and they laughed in their sleeve. How was the primitive Malayan to guess that a Chino, a Jap and two Malabar men could convert themselves into one American citizen by the use of those magical letters, INC. ?

The owners of the twenty odd luggers were Japanese, Chinese, Arabs, Singapore Malays and Indians. Of these the Japanese owned by far the most.

The war in the hills did not greatly affect the pearlers, except in so far as it was not safe for the crews to go ashore indiscriminately on any of the islands in the group while native passion ran high. In fact, trade in pearls was brisker than ever then, for the natives brought out many a good piece they had hoarded. The money was badly needed for rifles and ammunition which in some mysterious way, in spite of the constant patrolling of the waters by Customs and Navy launches, found their way to the islands from British Borneo near-by.

Captain Upnam of the Moro Constabulary and I sat in Don Pedro's lounge bar and enjoyed a cocktail together just after the sun had gone down. He asked me if I knew that General Pershing had arrived from Zamboanga and that there was talk of another expedition against the Moros to settle them this time for good. He told me some harassing tales of Moro atrocities, of the lawlessness in the interior, of the dangers the constabulary ran ; and as he was talking, presently a Moro constable, barefooted, with a typical kerchief headdress, and in a khaki uniform, entered, saluted and stood at attention.

He spoke to the Captain in Moro. I did not understand

what was being said, but when the man had done the Captain turned to me and said, "Now let's have another. You'll need a bracer because I want you to come along with me."

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Never mind," he answered. "You just come along. I want to show you a picture." So, after the third bracer, I accompanied him to a quiet spot in a side street close to the citadel gates. We stopped in front of a lamp-post from which an oil lamp swung, suspended by a stout wire and swaying a little in the night air. Three constabulary men jumped to attention as we came on the scene, and three Moros came like shadows out of the darkness and stood awkwardly behind the uniformed men.

Against the foot of the lamp-post was propped a fair-sized gunny-bag, something like a quarter-filled potato sack. There was an awed solemnity in the air, and I wondered what the Moros behind had to do with the soldiers, and what the soldiers had to do with the sack, and why they had all come to this out-of-the-way spot where there was scarcely any light to see by, and why they had sent for the Captain, and what business this was of mine, and lastly why we were all waiting and for whom. My mind was a question mark.

But after a while, when we had been waiting in silence for some minutes, we heard some uneven heavy steps, the steps of the limping Governor. He loomed up out of the darkness clad in evening dress, his white shirt gleaming oddly in what light there was.

"The General thanks you, but he's not anxious to see," he said to the Captain. "So let's get on with this business. I want to get back to the crowd at the Army Club. Pershing's brought some pretty girls in his party from Zambo."

The Captain spoke to the Moros who stood in the shadow behind the constabulary men. They stepped forward and he asked their names, repeating them for the benefit of the Governor. The latter said a few words to each and bid the soldiers open the sack at the foot of the lamp-post and pour out the contents for him to see. They grabbed the sack and turned it upside down. There came tumbling out on to the mud five ugly Moro heads. The Governor, to see them better and identify them, turned them over and over most daintily with the tip of his dancing slippers. He knew each head by name and spoke to them in a familiar, chiding voice: "I told you I'd get you, and get you I did!"

He next turned to the three Moros again, made them each a gift of money on behalf of the Government and finally, with a friendly but mighty slap on the shoulder, dubbed the chiefest of them "Panglima"—Baron of the Palisaded Village—Knight of the Mountain Trail.

This was the first dubbing of a Malay knight I had witnessed, and it was done in true Knights of Columbus style.

Later on I learnt the story of the men who had lost their heads to the Government. They were desperadoes and had been outlawed after many warnings with a price upon their heads.

Whilst General Pershing, then Governor of Mindanao and Sulu, was on the island he made several new civil appointments. My friend Dicky Gibbs was made Municipal Presidente, and to celebrate the occasion he came out next day in a brand-new pair of white bluchers and fined half a dozen Chink merchants in the municipality against whom he had nursed a grievance for months past.

"What's the good," he said to me, "of having power if you can't sting the guys you don't like?"

Talk about new brooms sweeping clean! No sooner

was he duly installed in his chair at the Municipal Presidente's desk than he issued ordinance after ordinance, to the utter discomfiture and disgust of those at whom they were aimed—the Chinese merchants and storekeepers. One of his first edicts inflicted graduated fines on the owners of carabaos guilty of nuisance on the public roads within the confines of the citadel: thirty pesos for the liquid, and fifty for the other offence! Dicky was a humorist. The result of this new ruling was that every owner of a carabao-cart provided his driver with a capacious shovel, or if their pockets weren't deep enough to incur the untoward expense, provided an old gasoline tin instead. At several vantage points in the citadel the Presidente had posted his minions and woe to the driver and owner of any beast that betrayed the least looseness of its bowels in the presence of one of them.

I, like many others, was hugely amused and chaffed Gibbs frequently for the ingenuity he displayed in collecting revenue. But at last I too became a victim of his game. I was still possessor of the carabao train which I had purchased for use in connection with my Indanan store, and as I had not been able to dispose of the animals or carts I had rented them out to the municipality for carting road material. I therefore thought I was quite safe, but the ordinance distinctly laid it down that the "owner" of any offending animal was subject to the fine. One day one of my team of carabaos was guilty of both the lesser and the greater misdemeanour, and Dicky Gibbs fined me—his best friend—150 pesos.

This was the first rift in our friendship. From then onward he seemed to take deep delight in antagonising me, or so I fancied. He knew I had brought a motor truck from England at great expense for use on the newly built

island roads and that I had been promised a quasi-monopoly, for a time at least. Nevertheless he must needs beg or borrow from Pershing in Zamboanga a couple of discarded army trucks, fit them up as charabancs for the natives to ride in the first time of their lives, and so get "first blood" before my carpenter could get my vehicles ready for that trade. I believe, after all, my truck got the start of his by one day (after which it broke down!) and thus I still had the honour of having inaugurated the first motor coach service for the Moros in the Island of Jolo. That was a real bit of pioneering.

Dicky's next trick was to give judgment against me in a dispute in which he functioned as arbitrator. He did so, he said, because although right was on my side, the other fellow had less money than I, and he himself had been the under-dog too long not to sympathise with my opponent. After that Dicky and I were friends no longer. But my rancour is long since gone, and I still have a kind feeling for him—or his shade.

It was he who introduced me to the secretary of the Rajah of Sarawak and to one of the Asiatic Petroleum Company's chief geologists, both of whom had come on a visit to the islands at about this time. They said they were on vacation—a round trip only—but I had my doubts, and sounded the latter. He was not giving away information, but I have every reason to believe that when the oil on Jolo is needed it will soon be made to flow. Someone is keeping an eye on that potential supply.

Jamalal Kiram II. returned from Borneo by the same boat as these two "holiday-makers," with the wad of money the Borneo Company had handed him for arrears of tribute money. If he didn't squat that same night among the big Chinks in a game of fan-tan! Of course they cleaned him

out. He complained to the Governor, who called all the Chinos who had sat in the game and made them give the Sultan back the money he had lost. So after that no Chino would ever play with His Highness again. And he wondered why !

At about this time I met the American Episcopalian Bishop Brent. He had a small mission station on the island, but I am not aware that a single Moro ever became an Episcopalian, although the natives appreciated the medicines, the pants and the silver coin which the wealthy American lady, who came out once a year from the States, distributed among them out of admiration for the good Bishop. Little did I guess then that that same divine would later on, during the war, preach at St. Paul's before the King.

At one of the receptions given by the philanthropic lady in Jolo I met real native aristocracy ; only an elderly native matron, true, but so dignified and stately in her bearing that I asked permission through my interpreter to call on her. She was the wife of Hadji Tahil, one of the Sultan's trusted councillors. I accordingly took the first opportunity of calling on the Hadji. My second impression of the lady confirmed the first. I have not met any duchesses except in books, but if there is a specific grand manner peculiar to duchesses, then this native matron displayed it. How much dignified grace and affability was wrapped in her wrinkled brown skin and how transparent her goodness of heart ! I stayed longer than the regulation time, and still wonder whether she thought Europeans have very peculiar manners.

This lady's husband's near kinsman, the Dato of the same name, caused me to do an act which might have been fraught with grave consequences for me had the authori-

ties known of it and placed the wrong construction upon it. One day the Dato Tahl, a proud and headstrong youth, the typical mountain Moro warrior, quick to take offence and slow to forgive or forget, came to my office with some ten of his followers. They were all armed to the teeth, and I was not a little taken aback. When the Dato and his suite had settled themselves in a semicircle on mats, Sayid my interpreter explained that the Dato had come on business. He had a batch of pearls—heirlooms handed down from father to son for several generations. But he was now in need, very urgently, of cash and was anxious to sell. A condition of the sale, however, would be that I should pay one-third of the purchase money in cash, one-third for his account to a person he would name in Singapore, and a third to a certain man who would come on the next inter-island boat and deliver to me sixty barrels of Green Island cement. The price the young Dato demanded was higher than any Bond Street jeweller would like to ask of a client who takes a twelve months' credit, but the pearls were exquisite for size, lustre and tint. We were two hours and a half over that deal, during which time he and his suite smoked three of my tins of "Three Castles." At last he accepted my offer, and I had no reason to jib at the conditions or to suspect that there was anything wrong. Nor did I know till many months had gone by that I had, unwittingly, as good as financed a war against the United States of America.

A week or so after the arrival of the Green Island cement, it was freely rumoured that the Moros in the hills were again getting restless, that they had built a cotta or palisaded fort on Mount Bacsac, that Dato Tahl was leading the misguided patriots, and that the Moros all over the island were quitting their field-labours, their carabaos and ploughs

—and that bolos, krisses, lances and bronze lantaker guns of old Chinese design and casting were being brought out.

These rumours were disconcerting enough, because there had been every indication that the Moros were at long last settling down peacefully and were content that the American Eagle had taken them under his wing. But I, in particular, was greatly concerned in the truth of these rumours. I had a short time before, and after long protracted negotiations, leased a few acres of land within half a mile of the citadel and built a hemp bodega upon it; it was a substantial structure which also housed the machinery and the latest device for stripping the abacca or Manila hemp instead of by the laborious hand method then in vogue all over the Philippine Islands. It was my latest venture, and I had spent no end of time and thought and a good deal of money before I had got so far in the realisation of my automatic hemp-stripping dream. The building was quite exposed, with none other anywhere near, and the watchmen—themselves Moros and ex-constabulary men, for whom I had obtained permits to carry firearms—were scared too and would not stay at their posts.

The world's demand for this fibre is constantly on the increase, and since the plant grows wild and abundantly in most parts of the Philippines it can be readily seen what an advantage an automatic stripper would be. I had read Government reports and statistics on the subject, and had seen with my own eyes the potential wealth in abacca all around me, and also the herculean labour which the extraction of the fibre by the hand method demanded. I imagined I was called upon to be a pioneer in this field also; but I am afraid that the inventor of the automatic stripper I purchased had still not solved the problem. However,

even if his contrivance had worked I doubt whether the Moros would have spared it when they destroyed my building.

One moonless night a number of launches stole alongside the dock, and all the men General Pershing could spare in Mindanao came ashore and moved silently along the causeway through the citadel and out by the other gate. Still silently, they disappeared like a train of ghosts along the trail which led to Bacsac, the mountain in whose extinct crater the Moro forces were making their stand.

Other launches discharged their soldier freight at points still closer to Mount Bacsac and the pack-train also departed with the mountain guns. I stood by when it left. There was no sound from the men, and even the mules seemed to know what was expected of them. When all had disappeared through the arched gate I turned in. But never a wink did I sleep that night.

By sunset of the next day the first wounded were brought in—the beginning of the long roll of wounded and dead. It was real war this time. And instead of pursuing my daily round of tasks I followed behind the coffins of American officers and men, sometimes because I had sat at their table the week before and sometimes merely because their skin had been the colour of mine. We were never told how many had fallen on one side or the other, but we did know that for every Moro who died a wife and children died too. The warriors had taken their families into the crater with them. It was really a last stand. The women were far fiercer than the men and used even their children as shields, or missiles. Dato Tahlil's young wife and her children were killed too when it was resolved to die to the last person rather than surrender to the hated Unbeliever; but Dato Tahlil himself survived and surrendered. He was brought

in, a beaten rebel, tried, condemned, reprieved, released—and lived to give trouble once or twice again.

But the war gong which called his men together on Bacsac now calls us to meals in my London home, and his beautiful kris with the handsomely carved ivory handle reminds me of those days every time I enter the door of my hall. Both were lost by the Dato, or taken by force of arms in the cotta at Bacsac, by the American soldier who "guessed" that the 300 pesos I offered him would buy more fun than he could get by contemplating these Moro relics.

That was practically the last stand the Moros of Jolo made against their overlords. Shortly after these events, General Pershing went on leave—he was said to be a very sick man—and never returned to the islands.

Just as we were settling down again to normal conditions I heard confidentially from the hospital sergeant that several cases of cholera had occurred in the interior. But I paid little attention at the time. It seemed to be nothing more than an item of news then.

I received an unexpected visitor from the steamer: Syd Lang, the pearler from Broome who had carried poetry books in one pocket and pearls in the other, the same fellow who read the lessons on Sundays in the tin tabernacle on the bluff in Pearltown and who had sold me a few pearls when no one else would. He now stalked into my office as though we had only parted an hour ago. He had just arrived and could find lodgings nowhere; so I called my boy and had him rig up a bed on my bit of porch.

"Now tell me," I said to Syd, "what have you come here for, pearl-buying or pearling?"

"Well," he replied, "I've lost all my own capital and now I work for a fellow I haven't much use for, but he

pays me five hundred pounds a year and a bonus. I am his pearl-buyer."

"Is so-and-so your boss?" I said.

"You've guessed it," he answered.

"Then it's war to the knife with you, Syd, because he once played a dirty trick on me. But so far as you personally are concerned you're my guest for so long as you care to stay in the island. And you shall buy to your heart's content for three days and I shan't compete with you, because you once showed me kindness in Broome."

He smiled, which made him look plainer than ever. He had the poorest looks of almost any man I ever saw; his was, in truth, *la beauté de la laideur*.

"You needn't worry," he said, "since you're the big boss buyer here I'll only stay the week. Anyhow I have to visit every pearl fishery in the world during the year, so that doesn't leave long for Sulu!"

When his buying was done he told me that he had been given a commission by an American millionaire he had met in Singapore to buy antique Chinese porcelain. He had been shown exactly what to buy and what to leave alone, had been given a book on the subject by his client, and, in short, was well primed. He went amongst the Chinese, visited their shops, their homes and their other haunts and kept his eyes well skinned, but found nothing. Similarly, with the homes of the Filipinos he also drew a blank. He went round to the Moro notables, chewed betel in their company and squatted on the floor in the hope of picking up the antique ware which his informant had told him he would find in Sulu since the Chinese had for thousands of years traded their pottery against the island's pearls and gold. But the Moro datos had broken the ancient pots, if ever they had had any.

TRADE WINDS

Then Syd went to see Hadji Butu, the Sultan's prime minister, and picked up two vases of the kind he sought, and three in the Sultan's house—five in all. He paid a fancy price and was well content. He compared the marks on the vases with those in the book for three days and nights, and every time he looked he chuckled to himself because of the five vases four were priceless, so his book said, and one only a dud. So he packed the four in medicated cotton wool and a triple layer of straw and shipped them to America. The dud he said I could have for a spittoon—for which purpose, I suppose, the Sultan had used it. He caught the first boat out, and in a short while I had a letter from him : " Out of the five pots I bought, the four I sent to America are duds. Yours is the only genuine ; don't use it for a spittoon." Which is why, no doubt, my wife keeps it on a drawing-room shelf 8 feet above the floor !

CHAPTER XX

CHOLERA

AT about this time I made my fifth pilgrimage to Manila, the capital of the islands, on Luzon Island, and visited on the way many of the islands both for experience and material gain. As though to celebrate the occasion of my fifth trip, I met this time more notable men than on any previous voyage. The new Governor of Mindanao and Sulu, the pioneer of rubber planting in the Philippines, the Director of the Rockefeller Institute, the Governor of the Leper Colony on Culion Island, the Minister of Justice, His Eminence the Archbishop of Manila, the First President of the Philippine National Bank, the President of the Bank of the Philippines, the heads of the Senate and the Assembly, the author of *The History of Sulu*, also the greatest authorities in the islands on horticulture, mining, fishing, ornithology and forestry.

A word from the one, a remark from the other, was to me a lesson in itself, and I found that these men, instead of being full of their own importance, were good listeners and were as much interested in my small doings as I was in their pursuits.

For quite some time now I had contributed considerably, directly and indirectly, to the development of the Sulu pearling industry, and to the building up of a respectable fleet of pearling luggers. My indirect contribution lay, of course, in the fact that I constantly laid out very large sums for pearl shell and pearls, paying prices which until then had been unknown in that part of the world; my

direct contribution was the provision of well-built seaworthy craft, which I built in British North Borneo yards and leased or sold with the necessary gear to anyone willing to run them economically and pay me in shell and pearls.

I was also buying other native products. In addition to those I have mentioned earlier in these pages, were window shell for the Manila and Chinese markets, used in connection with cabinet work such as screens and frames, doors and windows; and almacica, the petrified resin of a former age dug out of the ground by the natives in astounding quantities, and known in the varnishing trade as gum copal.

For all these activities I required cash, however, and there was no bank in the island or in the whole of the Sulu archipelago. I had no means of estimating my requirements from day to day or week to week. If my cabled transfers from Europe came by way of Singapore, the gold specie on which I insisted, because I made an extra few per cent. by paying in gold, had to be shipped to me and it meant frequent and vexatious delays. If my transfers of funds came via Manila, I risked having to wait until every postmaster in the islands had re-directed the shipment to me. On one occasion I had to wait a month beyond the necessary time for transit.

I had, in some measure, met all these emergencies by coming to an arrangement with the Chinese and Indian merchants. It was simple but effective. The local Chinese traders and the Indian bazaar-keepers had to remit to their correspondents for their indents, and they had been in the habit of sending their actual currency by mail to a Manila bank ten days away by inter-island steamer, with the request that the equivalent be paid in Hong-Kong, Canton, Singapore, Saigon or Shanghai as the case might be. But

I told them that I would accept their money and issue them cheques free of commission on my Manila, Hong-Kong, etc., bankers as they chose. This arrangement was mutually advantageous, but the fly in the ointment was that they frequently brought me more money than I could cope with.

Besides, carrying on banking as well as my other activities was much too much for my poor head, and I had, therefore, been agitating for a long time to get one of the Manila banks to open a branch office in the island. On this trip to Manila I succeeded in interesting the Bank of the Philippine Islands, and they opened an office in Jolo—at last. I am afraid their experience was anything but profitable, because before many months had elapsed they decided to close the branch. The wily Chinos had got round one of the tellers, a Filipino half-caste, who played ducks and drakes with the bank's money and their clients' accounts, in spite of the vigilance of the shrewd English manager.

The manager was a very pleasant fellow, though he never missed an opportunity of letting me know that there were no flies on him. I liked him and we got on well together, and when the big trouble broke out which upset the whole world, he, the Collector of Customs and myself, the only three Britishers in the island, sought comfort in each other's company.

Meanwhile the bank was there. It was a great convenience and helped to speed things up a bit in that Sleepy Hollow.

On my return from Manila I heard rumours that the principal diver on the *Hetty*, my number one lugger, had disposed of a pearl of price to a Chino on the long pier. I investigated and had every reason to believe that I had been done out of a really big thing. In cases of this kind it is always most difficult to produce proof. Mere rowing

leads to nothing more than the loss of the diver's services ; and if he is indebted to you to the tune of say one hundred and fifty pounds or two hundred pounds you are so much the poorer too. However, I questioned the fellow discreetly and am afraid did not wish him too well in my heart. Next day he boarded the *Hetty*, ready to sail for the pearling grounds. Forty-eight hours later, Sayid told me the *Hetty* had come in with a dead diver. I went to see him. He had been brought ashore, and there on a wooden plank lay a bloated corpse swelled to three times its normal bulk. The eyes were closed, the brown face had turned a dirty yellow, and in the features lay unspeakable woe. Was it imagination that made me read into them regret for what he had done ? I forgave him, anyhow, with all my heart, and was unfitted to go about my work for the rest of the day.

But on the next day, by way of consolation, I bought the exquisite joss-house pearl from the Chino who officiated in the Chinese temple. Was it my own pearl or some other lugger owner's ? Why was there so much mystery about it, and why was it brought out from the hollow skull of a waxen idol ? Really and truly there seemed no mystery about it at the time. In those days I took everything that happened completely as a matter of course—part of the day's work.

On my daily rounds I visited the long pier twice at least, in the early morning and again an hour before sunset. It sufficed for the Chinos to see me pass. If any of them had anything for me he gave me a sign and I entered his shop quite casually so that none of his neighbours should know that he had any pearls for sale. It was nothing extraordinary for a Chino to lift up a plank in the flooring or to slide back a secret panel in the wall where he had

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placed the pearls. Therefore, when the joss-house keeper (or was he a Buddhist priest?) motioned to me to enter the temple I saw nothing out of the way in that, and when he unscrewed the wax idol's head, I saw in it no departure from the usual method of his compatriots on the Chino pier.

Only long after did I begin to wonder how this exquisite pearl had found its way into the skull of a wax image, before whom were spread on salvers of chased brass the diversified fruits of the country, and on plates of Canton blue dainties which only a Chinese waxen god can delight in. I asked no questions—your inquisitive man is not appreciated by the Chino—paid cash down and never saw the joss again, or his attendant.

Everything went swimmingly: the trouble with the natives seemed over for good, the land yielded of its riches, the sea was bountiful, the people seemed contented, and my own affairs prospered amain.

Then came the staggering news. Europe ablaze! My bank credits were cut off almost before I had thoroughly grasped the import of the first cabled messages; my correspondents cancelled all buying orders—and several of my big consignments had actually gone the day before on a North German Lloyd steamer via Borneo ports. Here was half my fortune on a German ship, uninsured, of course, against risk of war. But within three days she was back, chased by British cruisers and finding refuge in Philippine waters. There she remained till the Americans came into the war. It took me a year to get them to release my cargo, and, strange anomaly! I had to pay the freight to Hamburg.

I was the last to stop the work on my luggers, hoping against hope. All other owners had laid up theirs long before, for there was now no market for either shell or

pearls. I put my staff on half pay at first. Then in a few weeks I reluctantly realised that we were in for a long spell and parted with all my personnel, except for a couple of watchmen. These were such excellent guardians, that, when a year later I had a mind to put the luggers in commission again, everything portable had been removed; how the copper from their bottoms could disappear with two watchmen on each boat has never been satisfactorily explained, unless copper plates are at times soluble in brine !

I was now a man of leisure and could devote several hours a day to reading—when my thoughts didn't stray to London. For my people at home it was a terribly harassing time, but at least they had the excitement of being on the spot. For those 10,000 miles away but with relations in the danger zone, it was almost worse. If I look back on those days I wonder how I could bear to stick to my post.

Perhaps I could not have done so but for the cholera which now broke out in all its fury. There had been a few cases here and there within the last year, brought in, it was said, from Borneo whence all good things in Sulu came. Now, however, owing to the fact that the big Chino dealers in Singapore had curtailed their agents' credits on the island and would ship no rice by the fortnightly steamer, the natives were horribly underfed. The cholera spread rapidly among them and claimed its victims in greater numbers each day. This was a time to forget one's own troubles. The Government had need of those who could lend a hand. I was asked to distribute the food-stuffs that were sent by the authorities, and to buy cargoes of rice for sale at cost to those who could afford to pay.

Here was an occupation to take you out of yourself, and I threw myself into it. It was no rare sight in those days

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of tribulation to see a native walk down the street—break into vomit—drop in convulsive pain—and die where he fell.

We, the few white men in the place, took the catering at the mess into our own hands. We ate no uncooked greens or fruit, drank nothing but almost boiling water, and had our meals served piping hot on heated plates. The native servants were taught by us to wash their hands with carbolic soap in hot water a great number of times a day. We were taking no chances. But one day, at dinner, I saw the Filipino mess-boy who waited on me come out of the W.C. and begin serving without washing his hands. As he carried my soup his thumb took a bath in the liquid. Incensed, I caught him a clip over the ear and he dropped the plate, spilling the hot soup all over me.

That was not the end of the episode. That afternoon, while I was enjoying my siesta, two municipal constabulary men woke me up and took me before Surisso, the Filipino Juez del Paz. I was charged with striking a Filipino, pleaded guilty and was fined ten pesos for the offence.

My mess-mates, who had heard of my being taken down to the court-house, came into the justice's room and remonstrated with him. But he said the law was the law and the fine must stand, although he realised that I had received great provocation owing to the prevalence of cholera. But to show his own disapproval of the man's trick, and that he was not at all prejudiced against the white gentlemen, he took off his collar and coat and called the unsuspecting mess-boy outside on to the porch. The judge invited the boy to step up close and slapped his face vigorously, once on the right and once on the left cheek. Then he leisurely put on his collar and coat and, followed by all, re-entered the Justice Chamber and fined himself

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twenty pesos—ten pesos per smack ! After which we adjourned to Don Pedro's saloon and drank to the mess-boy's better understanding.

In due course the epidemic subsided like a fire that has burnt itself out for want of fuel. The figures may not be correct, but it was said that one-tenth of the native population on the island had been wiped out. Four thousand out of forty was a big slice.

After that conditions returned to normal, as they always do if you give them time. The next exciting event on the island was the killing of Tuan Charlie (Charlie Schuck), the white man who was as much a Moro as any of them and was regarded as one of their chiefs. He was the same fellow whom the American soldier had shot in the thigh when he had been suspected of treachery on a punitive expedition.

I had seen a great deal of Charlie, for I had equipped his pearling boat ; but he never sold me any shell or pearls, except once, when he got much the better of me—good luck to him ! He had also managed my lumber company : I was the chairman and got the pains ; he was the contractor and got the plums. Finally he had leased me the land on which I had fooled about with automatic hemp-stripping gear, when again he had got the sweets and I the bitter. Now he was dead, because a Moro, a common tao, it was said, did not approve of the Tuan's making love to his wife. Without preliminary he chopped off Tuan Charlie's head with one swipe as he sat at table. It was so quickly done, said an eye-witness to me, that Charlie had time to raise his hands to his hurt neck before he fell over.

I was sitting on Dr. Russell's porch the night this happened outside the citadel, and the Moro messengers came in on their ponies with the news and a request for

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medical aid. But when the doctor learned the truth he refused to go. Did they think that a white medicine man could sew a head on to its trunk and restore the man to life again?

Tuan Charlie was greatly in debt everywhere, and his creditors seized all they could lay their hands on. The public auction of his estate and lands was held at an office in the plaza near to mine. Chinos were bidding briskly and buying in very quickly. As I sat writing at my desk I heard the auctioneer's voice coming loudly; but presently there was a lull, and I rose from my desk to have a peep at the auctioneer and the crowd. There were only half a dozen Chinos left in the room and the auctioneer looked tired and worn. He was sick of this business, and wearily in English, Spanish, Chinese and Malay as I watched he sang out the description of the last item of the sale. It was an island.

The six Chinos stood in a half circle and not one opened his mouth. The auctioneer frantically praised the beauties of the island, the climate, the wild cattle, the ipil, yakal and camogan trees that grew there. "How much shall I say," he implored. "Five pesos for a start?"

I bid ten. I never could resist an island—or a bargain. The sleepest Chinaman of the lot bid five more. The auctioneer worked up a spurt of brisk bidding for a moment until sixty pesos was reached. I had no real thought of buying, but just to help the auctioneer I called out, "Ocento (eighty)," and got ready to go as soon as the next man should top me with his bid. But, bless my heart and soul, as my son would say, the auctioneer shouted quickly, "Eighty for the first, second and third time," and brought down his hammer with a bang.

"Don Lou-iss," he said to me, "I congratulate you.

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You are now lord of the Island of Panducan in the Pangutarang group in the Mindoro Sea. . . ."

A couple of days later the papers were made out to me. I inquired about my new possession. The description of the auctioneer was quite correct. The climate was good, very good. But the natives were not particularly friendly. There were sixty families of them and heaps of wild carabao and wild pig; also an abundance of valuable hardwoods and a good foundation for a coconut plantation—1,600 trees in bearing. And there was a pearling-bed only ten miles distant.

But I never went to see my possession. Although often thinking of doing so, I had no desire to make the long trip in an open native vinta, and no steamer or launch ever went near. Besides my tenants were *very* wild, and were likely to cut off my head as soon as look at me.

I have never parted with my rights to this "property," so I suppose I am still lord of the Isle of Panducan in the Mindoro Sea. My only regret is now that the 200,000 hectares of land are not so many square feet a bit closer to Piccadilly Circus.

CHAPTER XXI

"ADÈLE"

PRESIDENT WILSON had appointed a new Governor-General for the Philippine Islands, and in due course Mr. Harrison made a state trip south to see us. The big hall in the court-house was packed for his reception: Datos, Panglimas, chiefs of all kinds, big men and small, all came to welcome him as they had been bidden. The Governor spoke and the interpreter translated. His speech hinged upon this, that he himself, the biggest man in the islands, paid heavy income tax to the United States, and that they, the men of this island, ought to be glad that the poll-tax was only one peso a year and pay it willingly.

This tax had been a bone of contention since the coming of the Americans, and frequently the Moros had gone on the war-path over this peso which apparently brought them no return. When the reception was over I heard an old Moro say, "If the Governor-General didn't tell us a lie, and he really pays the tax, then he is a fool. No one could force so great a man to pay!"

An American in the Governor-General's suite and fresh from the States twitted a Moro with the native custom of using American or English gold coins for buttons on their vests and coats. The native, no fool and of ready wit, made answer, "We Moros carry gold on our coats. You Americans carry it in your mouths."

Amongst the men in the Governor-General's party was one who came to see me in my office peddling life insurance in a nonchalant sort of way, as though he were conferring

a favour. He was a tall well-groomed fellow, with a boater set at an acute angle upon his big head. I said on learning his name, "You're an American, of course?" because I knew he was not.

"Hundred and ten per cent. American, my boy," he drawled in a faintly Hebraic way, and proceeded to talk business. But when he saw that I was not interested in a life policy, or protection against burglars, or against fire, hail or locusts, he turned to go. Now I knew all about the man, and about his people, and even the name his brothers called him by; and I thought I would have my joke because he talked so big and travelled with the Governor-General, President Wilson's friend. So as he reached the door and his back was still turned to me I shouted suddenly, "Avroom!" which is the Hebrew for Abraham.

He stopped short on the threshold and looked back, but I sat writing calmly at my desk. Surely he hadn't heard, and I hadn't spoken. He turned away again and as he did so I shouted once more, "Avroom!" This time he came close up to my desk and said, "Who the devil are you? You know me. Where have we met?"

"We haven't met before," I answered. "But we have tribal affiliations. I knew your brothers in London, and I know whence you hail, and that your father, good man, was a minor official in my great uncle's consistory court. But perhaps I'd better not remind you that you are a Polish Jew since you are so proud of your one hundred and ten per cent. American blood!"

He laughed, because he understood a joke. In fact later on he became unofficial jester at Governor-General Harrison's court, and when America entered the war he was also made a volunteer colonel by his friend, who thus turned jester in his turn. I don't suppose the new colonel

knew from which end of a gun the bullet ought to come out. I saw him once on parade, and the uniform the Manila Chinese tailor had made for him fitted like the flannel suits a Shanghai Chinaman once made for me—whenever I wore it I began to speak the purest Mandarin !

It was at this time that I began to have visions. I have a lively recollection that when I was a boy of about three or four I saw people and animals of a kind that no one else could see, but when I described these to my elders I was told brusquely to forget it. When I was ten years old I spoke to my playmates of mysterious creatures around us, but they said I was a liar, because boys don't mince words. By dint of being told to forget and not to lie, I saw no more visions for years. But my gift—if gift it was—was not entirely to desert me.

Now I had made up my mind, after many fruitless months, to leave the islands. It served no purpose to hang on any longer when I could neither buy nor sell. My trunks stood ready packed and labelled, “ New York, via Manila and San Francisco.” Then one night I had a vision. It was more than a dream, because I'll swear I was not fast asleep. I saw myself seated at my desk in my office. A Moro came in, took off his large scarlet kerchief which he wore in place of a belt, untied a knot and placed a huge black pearl on my table. He spoke Malay, and I understood him and needed no interpreter. Finally I bought the pearl from him—and when I came to myself I remembered even the weight of the gem and the price I had seemed to pay for it.

The next night I had another vision. I saw a Chinaman come into my office with whom I had never before done business. He too brought an enormous pearl—a drop-

shape piece, the size of a small walnut. This pearl was not black like the other, but of an exquisite pink, rose-leaf colour, without blemish and of extremely high lustre. When I awoke I again remembered the weight and the price I had paid.

Then I stopped having visions. But this was enough for me. I unpacked my trunks and waited for the two men to turn up. A fool, wasn't I? Perhaps. But I had not to wait long. At the end of four weeks or so a Moro stepped into my office one morning as though he had stepped out of my dream; the same man and no other. As soon as I saw him I knew what he had in that kerchief round his waist, and what it would weigh and the price he would ask and the price I would finally give. It was all cut and dried in my mind. This pearl was the size of a large walnut, had a wonderful blue-black sheen, but was a freak; it was as hollow as a drum. In all respects it was like the pearl of the vision.

Within a week my second nocturnal visitor turned up in full sunlight. When he entered the office I could tell him what he had come for and the weight of the pearl he had and what it looked like and what he'd get for it—nay, what he'd jolly well have to take, since the whole matter was predetermined and I could not pay him more if I wanted to. Everything turned out as in the dream. I bought the biggest piece I ever held in my hand, an exquisite drop-shape of rose-leaf tint, a star.

I queried the seller with regard to the place from which it had been fished, for he was not a local man and the specimen reminded me, by its lustre, tint and texture, of some other pearls I had bought from time to time from strangers. I was keen to find out whence they had come.

At first the Chino was unwilling to give more information than was necessary to complete the deal, but I humoured him and at last he told me. It appeared that he was not the sole owner of the pearl, but was one of a syndicate of fifteen members—three Chinese tienda-men and twelve Moros who shared a prau and several vintas. The Moros dived naked for pearls at extraordinary depths somewhere in the Celebes Sea off Tawi-Tawi, the large southernmost island in the Sulu group.

Now I was sure that Tawi-Tawi, the island with the mystical name, produced not only the divers with the most powerful lungs, but also the biggest and finest pearls, in texture and tint the equal of anything that ever came out of the Persian Gulf. But the naked deep-sea divers of Tawi-Tawi keep their secret well; and if any lugger is misguided enough to prowl in what they consider their own preserves the interloping crew stands a poor chance of returning alive. Yet even if the ordinary diver, working from a lugger and equipped with brazen helmet and rubber airhose, were to try to reach the treasures of these grounds, he could neither reach the same depths in safety as the naked divers nor stay below to work. No wonder the shell when found is large and fine and the pearls also large and of exquisite quality; the naked diver fishes and dives to live, and when he has won a prize he rests till lack of rice sends him down to the depths once more. Thus the oysters and pearls have ample time to grow and mature, for the wealth of the grounds is rarely disturbed.

Tawi-Tawi, mysterious isle with the mystical name, this wonderful pearl brought up by thy sons from thirty-five fathoms of ocean will some day adorn a reigning queen—or confer lustre on a movie star! Mysterious as beauty it came into my hands, and as a paragon gem must have a

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name, like a woman, I called my marvel " Adèle " after my mother. I wrote and told her of this, and, being witty and wise, she replied : " It is well-nigh impossible for a boy to get out of his mother's debt. But your naming the gem after me was a good attempt ! "

CHAPTER XXII
AMERICAN INTERLUDE

Now, at last, I could sail, since my visions had been fulfilled. I went to the customs-house to have my goods listed, described, checked and sealed, and an advance notice posted to the San Francisco customs. Having been certified as fished in American territorial waters, my pearls would not be dutiable in the United States.

Six weeks later I stepped ashore at San Francisco, and there the customs men searched my trunks so thoroughly that if the bloom of a peach had been hidden in the seams of a handkerchief they must have found it ! At last one of the officers said, " You have some pearls, haven't you ? "

" Yes," I answered, " and not only some, but a big bunch of them ! "

" Where have you hidden them ? " he insisted, pointing to my trunk in which my clothes lay higgledy-piggledy, just as he and his chum had thrown them.

" You won't find them there, old chap," I said. " I've got them right on me."

" So you've tried to smuggle 'em ? " he said in a bullying voice.

" Smuggle yourself," I replied. " Why, you've had notice of my coming for over a week from the Manila customs-house. They are in a customs-sealed package ; I would not trust them to the mail, so I'm my own carrier."

" Hand it over," he demanded brusquely.

" Not on your sweet life ! It is after your office hours and therefore you can't lock them away in the collector's safe.

I won't take anyone else's receipt. Here's the package. You can see it's intact. You won't run any risk by letting me sleep at my hotel with the goods on me. And if you won't let me go I'll sleep in the inspector's room on a couple of chairs."

Well, they took me into their room and three of them put their heads together over me. In the end they decided to let me go if I would promise to come back at ten the next morning.

With the morning coffee the manager of the St. Francis Hotel sent me a blue-pencilled copy of the *San Francisco Examiner*. It contained a sensational account of a bold smuggling attempt, and my name writ large as the party who wanted to cheat the United States Customs, but wasn't quite smart enough to pull it off!

I rang up the editor and gave him a piece of my mind. Then I asked if his paper had money enough to pay the damages I was going to ask, as I was just off to a lawyer. I didn't wait to hear what he had to say, but slammed down the receiver. Before the earpiece was cold the editor's complaint clerk arrived with most profuse apologies, and a promise to print a denial in every edition that day and the next.

This business done, I went to the customs-house. If you please, when I got there the tip-top man had given word for me to be brought to him as soon as I arrived, for he too had read the paper over his morning coffee. He was a pleasant-spoken man. We chatted of this and that and then he opened up my Manila-sealed package and O.K'd the clearance. He next asked me to help him out. I was now the expert, not the criminal! They had at the customs four large round black Tahiti pearls of great price. They had belonged to a local import house which had tried to

smuggle them ; but for years the customs people had not been able to settle on the fine and duty, for out of a dozen experts called in not one agreed with the others as to value. I pointed out that I would probably be just as much out as anyone, but at any rate I would mention the value I would be prepared to pay for them then and there.

And so I valued them to the best of my ability ; but as the collector had no right to sell, all I got was his thanks on behalf of the United States Customs. I should have preferred the pearls !

These stories appeared in the San Francisco papers and were duly copied by the New York press, with the result that my wares and myself were well advertised. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. If I was annoyed by the San Francisco publicity I first received, I now had every reason to be thankful, for on this, my first visit to New York, where I knew not a soul and had no established market, the merchants looked me up at my hotel as soon as I arrived. For your New York business man is quick on the draw. Within a few days I was sold out at prices for which I had not dared to hope !

I sold all except the Tawi-Tawi gem, and that I didn't even show.

For some days I saw all the sights and forgot business. Then I remembered my promise to a Manila friend before I sailed. He had asked me to buy for him a large consignment of stockings, provided I could buy at his price and according to his sample.

Well, the manufacturers quoted the right price, but their quality did not seem to correspond to sample. I therefore asked them for a counter-sample which I might send to Manila for cabled confirmation, as a big amount was involved. But big firm though they were, and in spite of

my credentials, they refused to be twenty cents out of pocket for a half-pair of hose. So I told them to keep the whole lot and walked out furious.

I was in high dudgeon, and talked to myself rather volubly as I walked briskly down Broadway. And running rather than walking, I bumped into a fellow who seemed a decent sort. Before he had cursed much or had time to rub his toe we both fell to laughing, because we were boyhood friends and hadn't seen each other for many years.

As we lunched together I told him about the sample-hose episode which was still hot on my mind.

"So you dabble in textiles too!" he exclaimed, and without giving me time to deny the impeachment, continued that I must just come along right now and see a textile friend of his who was dying to have a correspondent in the Philippine Islands.

He was as impulsive as a whirlwind, and so keen on parading a Philippines friend that I was unable to resist. So along I went to see the "textile" friend. This friend was a Jewish youth of twenty-three who had started in business on his own account at the age of nineteen and had already double that number of clerks in a Broadway office the size of a small railway station. Such a bustle there was, the comings and goings of clerks, the ringing of bells, the heavy feet of porters with loads of sample-cards; and in the inner glass-partitioned office whence he could survey all that was going on sat, at a huge teakwood desk, the twenty-three-year-old with a big cigar in the corner of his firm mouth.

"So you're from Manila? We sell plenty of our goods there, but not direct, only through New York commission houses—and I'm sick of them. Manila, eh? Well, I must have the word "Manila" on my ledgers. It sounds pretty.

Say, will you take our agency? Good terms—I'm no piker!"

"My dear sir," I replied, "I am a pearl merchant, and know nothing of your lines. I couldn't do justice to you. And anyway you don't know anything about me."

"I don't care a whoop in hell," he said, "who and what you are. You come from Manila, and I must have Manila on my ledgers. Besides, I like your face. Promise to come and have lunch with me to-morrow—but now forgive me, for I'm busy and to-day is Cuban mail day. . . ."

Next day when I entered his private office he rang a bell. To the intruding clerk he said, "Bring those bills of lading for Manila."

The clerk returned with a sheaf of papers—invoices in original and duplicate, shipping and insurance documents, and all in apple-pie order. "Here," said the youngster, "is all you need. I've taken the liberty of appointing you my agent. It's only a small consignment, as you'll see: twenty-five thousand dollars worth of our assorted lines. There is a five per cent. commission for you on those prices, and keep whatever more you can make. I'm no piker. . . . Now let's go and have lunch. I feel good because Manila now stands on my ledgers!"

For five years, as long as conditions permitted, we did business together to our mutual profit—and all because that American stocking-house had wanted me to pay twenty cents for a half-pair of sample hose.

I went to see the British Consul. "Sir," I said, "I hate war and I don't want to get killed, and when I take a gun in my hand I'm afraid of it going off, but if you need another fellow or two over there I'll be one of the two."

H.M. Consul said, "This is very kind of you, but at present we've plenty of chaps who are fond of war, who

like getting killed, and love the bang of a gun. When the supply of youth gives out and we need middled-aged married men I'll send you a telegram."

That settled it. I was not to have a free passage across the Atlantic. But though I was not wanted at the front, I had no peace nor was my heart in my work because of a little woman and her three youngsters in London. What good it would do if I went home, and what protection my presence could afford them, I did not consider, but I arranged to sail for home. Then things were taken out of my hands. I received an urgent cable, "Stay where you are, the next boat brings me and the children."

Well for a week of nights and days—particularly nights—my heart thumped in my mouth the whole time, because of the subaquatic devils that were already, in 1915, a constant threat to the Atlantic shipping. But a week is a short time when one can talk about it in the past tense. One Friday my little lot set foot in New York. By the Monday they were attending an American school.

CHAPTER XXIII

OLD JACOPO

By now it was fairly evident that the war would not end in another six months as I had continued to hope. If I was returning to the Philippine Islands—and all my interests lay there—I must at once arrange some American connections since I had lost my European market. This I managed within the next few weeks, and obtained contracts for such Philippine products as I had already been exporting, besides others, such as tobacco, cigars, cane and reed. I had had no intention whatever of indenting; but it so happened that I got into close touch with the head of an enterprising Californian firm who was keen on getting into the Philippines market for canned goods, and we came to an understanding whereby all the organising devolved upon me.

I was now burning to return to the islands at the earliest possible moment and pick up the threads once more. However, man proposes and woman disposes. My wife, realising that it would mean another long parting, said, "Whither thou goest I will go!" and I had to make the best of it.

I had made my previous trip from the west coast to New York by the Santa Fé Line. Now for a change we decided to take the Canadian Pacific route across the Rockies to Vancouver and thence by way of the Japanese ports in the *Empress of Russia*. It was on this trip that the *Empress of Russia* covered the distance between Victoria, B.C., and Yokohama in what was then record time, but the voyage

itself was completely uneventful. I can only remember one incident.

After the first two or three days we encountered rather boisterous seas. A quiet-spoken middle-aged man, an American, to whom till then I had not spoken, came up to me and said, "Not pleasant weather, this, for the kiddies. By the way, I want you to bear in mind that if anything goes wrong you can count on me. I can take charge of two of your youngsters. . . ." He spoke in such a quiet casual manner that I only half realised what he was saying ; then I realised how gusty it really was and what a comfort it was to think there was a stranger handy, to turn to in case of need. That quiet man is still my friend, though he lives in the western United States, and we haven't seen each other since he left the Philippine Islands.

We docked in Manila Bay on American Independence Day. Late in the afternoon we arrived at our hotel, and in a row on the porch, seated in comfortable deep rattan chairs, were sitting all the hotel guests dressed in their dazzling whites. We, who had just come off the boat and were still in dark and dusty European dress, looked and—in one case at least—felt like poor relatives. My eldest girl, then ten, burst into convulsive tears as she stood with us on the bright porch waiting to be shown to our rooms.

"What's the matter?" asked her mother, alarmed.

"They are all dukes and duchesses," she wailed. "We are the only poor ones."

But the next day she was a peeress too in her own right—the right to wear spotless white clothes.

Someone at the hotel asked me if I had ever been to see Old Jacopo, a Catholic Chinaman of great wealth and enterprise, who was said to trade in everything under the sun. "He handles pearls too," my informant added, "but

he only sells the poor stuff and keeps the finest for his collection."

I went to see Jacopo (that was his Catholic name). Then and every subsequent time for several years he set before me the choicest fruits and the best Havana cigars before talking business. Nothing but the best of everything was Jacopo's idea of hospitality, towards the chance caller as well as the invited guest. In business, however, he was as keen as keen. There was little give and much take. His lingo was the most extraordinary articulate speech I have ever heard. It was a mixture of Castilian, Tagalog and Amoy dialect, and he was great on telling *risqué* stories in that queer idiom of his.

In between the eating of fruit, the nibbling at strange Chinese confections, and the smoking of exquisite cigars, he would bring out his priceless collection of Philippine pearls. There was not a single specimen that was of any value to the trade, but most decidedly Old Jacopo had gathered in sixty-five years a whole Noah's ark of animals, a museum of freaks and a chamber of horrors in one collection of malformed pearls. No money could buy a single piece of this collection, but after one had admired it for the twentieth time he was ready to show the other kind, for which he accepted money—provided one came up to scratch. I discovered many pieces for which, during my years in the fisheries, I had bid unsuccessfully. Jacopo had been my most formidable competitor for years, I found now, for he had bought as his fancy dictated and was so rich that he could wait for a customer twenty years without tiring of his goods.

Jacopo's book-keeper kept strict accounts, by a system of Chinese treble entry, for all ordinary trading; but no one, not even himself, kept notes of the purchases or sales of

pearls. Yet Old Jacopo knew when and from whom he had bought any given piece, what he had paid for it, and months after he had sold it and saw it again, to whom it had gone and for how much money.

It was sheer delight to trade with the old fellow, for while he was keen as mustard he was as straight as an arrow, and a nod from him was as good as any European banker's sealed bond. I was told that he had a half-score of wives in China, but he only admitted three to me. Of course, he provided for them and for their children most generously ; but in Manila he had one Chinese wife and a couple of concubines beside. In the dog days he considerably sent them and their youngsters into the Bontoc hills for the cool air, but he stayed behind to attend to business and the pretty mestizzas for whom he bought the most expensive French face-powders and perfumes. The Chinese wife more than suspected the goings-on of her lord, and used to burn sandalwood sticks before the great joss who rules over marital love, and place saucers on the domestic altar full of rich duck crackling, with an array of brass platters heaped with many delicious seeds. To leave no stone unturned, she also appealed to the Catholic padre—who pulled the patriarch's ear in gentle chiding as he stuffed his cassock with Havana cigars.

Jacopo was a strange mixture. He gave to the poor, because of his great heart. He contributed to every church because, as he said to me, "*Quien sabe ?* who knows which of them is right ?" He loved flowers to distraction. The rarest orchids hung from the trellis on his interior porch. Japanese dwarf trees, in rare Chinese pots, lined the wide stone balustrade ; and in one exclusive corner stood an orchid for whose wondrous bloom he waited from year to year as a fond lover waits for his wedding day—for it

blossomed only once in its life and then for only six hours.

One is apt to think of the Chinese as unemotional beings. But anyone who once saw Old Jacopo passionately kissing his flowers would begin to think differently.

He collected other curios besides freak pearls, but the wonder was the relative values he assigned to them. There were several cabinets in his sitting-room whose shelves were crammed with bric-à-brac, modern and old. He paid no attention to his priceless Sun or Ming vases, to exquisitely carved antique ivory figures, to translucent Tibetan jade of wondrous apple-green, to grotesque mannikins in ancient bronze or to costly Satsuma ware smothered in dust ; but he would point with an abandon of pride and with many gurgling chuckles to a French polichinelle made of coloured rags, a threepenny Punch and Judy show made of matchsticks and cotton wool, a Brummagem tin whistle, a gargoyle replica in cheap brass of the Durham Cathedral knocker, or a mechanical canary on top of a wooden Black Forest clock.

I was not in Manila when he died, so I am still wondering whether according to Chinese custom they burnt paper replicas of all these wondrous possessions at Jacopo's funeral so that their shadowy forms might accompany his shade to the great beyond !

CHAPTER XXIV

COMINGS AND GOINGS

THE new direction my affairs had taken necessitated the opening of an office in Manila. I placed my brother in charge of our interests in the Southern Islands and in particular of our pearl-buying and pearling business. Amongst other instructions, I directed that the English motor-truck which I had brought out some two years before, and which was to usher in a new era in Sulu, should now be sent to Manila for sale, as we had no further use for it.

But up-to-date American trucks were plentiful in the capital, and I could not find a ready buyer, until one day a broker brought to the office an ex-constabulary officer, a well-connected Filipino, who ran a rather big hacienda in the provinces. It was to be an out-and-out cash sale, but finally because I wanted to see the last of the truck I agreed to take half in cash and the balance in two short-dated promissory notes. He was to bring the money that afternoon, but when he came it was without the money and with an urgent telegram he had received from his wife asking him to buy at once an expensive agricultural implement she had ordered. Would I mind keeping the truck for a month or so till he could pay the first thousand? Well, there it was. And rather than garage the truck for a further unprofitable period I preferred to take a chance on the Filipino ex-constabulary officer, who was now, after all, a prosperous hacendero. I gave him the truck and he gave me four promissory notes which he signed with a flourish no bank director could equal.

But beautiful caligraphy is not everything. Subsequently half a dozen lawyers had those notes through their hands at one time or another, and two debt-collection agencies in Manila derived a small monthly income for a couple of years from those wretched things. But all to no avail. I could not collect. I got judgment in the courts, but you know how these things are managed, even in the West. Well, the Oriental has not much to learn about the intricacies of legal delay. If he won't pay he won't, and you can go hang.

But several years after I had given up pasturing on the herbage of Filipino commerce, in fact several years after I had returned to England, I came across these dishonoured notes amongst my papers. They put me into a sudden fury. So I sat down and wrote a letter—not to my debtor, but to the Municipal Presidente of his township. I wrote: "Much honoured sir, for many years was I established as a commerciante in several parts of your glorious islands, and last of all in Manila, *la verdadera perla del Oriente*—the Pearl of the Orient. I prospered and great kindness did I receive at the hands of your countrymen. And now, out of the fullness of my heart, I want to do something for them. I am, therefore, sending you enclosed four promissory notes of a total value of two thousand pesos in Philippine currency, signed by one of your much-respected fellow-townsmen for goods supplied by me. I make a free gift of these two thousand pesos to the indigent men and women of your Municipality who have passed the age of seventy. I stipulate, however, that for the trouble you, much-honoured sir, may be put to in the collection and distribution of these funds, there shall be set aside a sum sufficient to buy a handsome heavy gold watch and chain for yourself to wear on solemn occasions. . . ."

TRADE WINDS

In less than three months I received the Municipal Presidente's official reply. It breathed gratitude in every line. It assured me that my instructions would be faithfully carried out and that, while a beginning had already been made with the collection, I could rely that the total amount would be garnered during the period of his incumbency. Accompanying the letter was a flowery diploma of acknowledgment, which one day I may have framed. Good Presidente ! I could read between the lines, and knew that at any rate he had already secured his gold watch and chain. If I know the Filipino magistrate, that debtor had a strenuous time ahead of him. He might fool me, but not one of his own caciques. A fig for you, Señor Hacendero !

I had bigger fish to fry in those days, though, and soon forgot the truck deal, as I had had to forget many another unlucky transaction. Where logs are being sawed there is bound to be sawdust. Those were hectic days. The cry was for goods, and never mind the price. Whatever you paid, some bigger fool came along and gave you a profit because he was sure of finding some even bigger ass. From the isles in the south came shells and pearls aplenty, but as there was now no bank there and our pockets had bottoms, I went to see the president of the Philippine National Bank to arrange for a big credit. My brother, who was in Manila at the time, came with me.

Said the president, "What amount do you require ?"

"A million pesos at least," I replied at a venture.

"What security, gentlemen ?" he asked.

My brother who is the soul of modesty chipped in, "Our faces, sir."

"That's done it," I thought, dismayed.

But not a bit of it. The president remarked, "Well, I

COMINGS AND GOINGS

suppose that is as good as any other," and so we left it. He called in his chief of staff to arrange the details with me, because in those days a million pesos was a trifle for underlings to deal with—when the Philippine National played with the United States Federal reserve. And from then on, nearly to the end of the war, the question of funds did not worry me again.

Again I had to cross the Pacific. But this time I left my family as a pledge to the islands that I would return. The first funny thing that happened was that the captain of the steamer by which I travelled was a Jew. I had read somewhere that when Columbus set out to discover the United States he had a Jewish pilot on one of his caravels, or perhaps it was a geographer, or a sailor, or a medicine man. But so far as I knew, there had not been a Jewish sailor since. The thing was so rare that by the law of averages this was the only strange happening I was entitled to on this trip.

One month in the States and again I was on the Pacific, outward bound. I only remember two of the passengers: an American middle-aged couple, the most ill-assorted pair. She was a combination of grace, wit and learning, while he had robust health and wore home-made ties and insisted that there was no better dish than pickled pork and cabbage.

At Yokohama we went ashore together *à trois* and she, with the American thoroughness for taking in sights, insisted on going with us to have a peep at the world-renowned Yoshiwara—Grand Brothel—of Japan. We were received by the Abbess of one of the cloistered halls with courteous low bows and indrawn breath, but because there was a lady with us the little rouged and powdered nuns in their prettily flowered silk brocade kimonos kept

aloof. However, Mrs. American would have no shyness, and beckoned to them. Two of the younger sisters came up. We ordered tea, to give the Abbess a chance; and with a rouged and powdered nun on each knee, petting and kissing them at intervals, the lady poured for us.

When I look back I find that at that period I was more of a sailor than a merchant. I was constantly on the water and sampling every big liner on the Pacific run—the “Empress” boats, the comfortable steamers of the Dollar Line and the President Line, and the scrupulously clean Dutch boats as well as the latest Japanese liners. I am not sure how many times I did that thirty-day trip from the Philippines to the Californian coast or to British Columbia, but of every trip I brought back some abiding impression, usually of some trivial happening.

Thus, all I remember of one trip from San Francisco to Shanghai on the s.s. *Nanking* are the following two incidents. We had been having rather boisterous weather for several days and the fiddles had been strung across the small tables in the saloon for nine successive meals, when one evening at dinner the ship gave a great lurch. I don't know at what angle she stood for a second or so ere she came back, but the captain, the ship's surgeon and the whole company seated at table fell to the ground with their chairs atop of them. All the crockery and glasses came down with a fearful crash and the food made a mess on the floor which took the boys a considerable time to mop up. We all thought the end had come. The captain picked himself up and calmly left the saloon.

We heard afterwards that one of the quartermasters, a Chinaman, had dozed off at the wheel and on opening his eyes had found to his horror that she was off her course. He had brought her back rather suddenly, with the result

described. By the time the captain was through with him he was a job for the surgeon, and when we saw him slinking about a few days later part of him was yellow and the other part black. He looked like the old Austrian flag.

Amongst other passengers was a young Chinaman who had taken his degree at Harvard and also a special course in some mining college in the States, and was now, after years of intensive study, returning to his homeland to put his knowledge to practical use. He was very lonely and looked a pathetic figure because all his friendly advances were repulsed by the standoffish Englishmen on board. As for the Americans, they treated him as so much dirt. Well, I took a fancy to the poor fellow and gave him a good deal of my time. When we docked at Shanghai and everybody was ready to go ashore he came up to me and said, "Please don't go ashore yet but wait on board till I return. I just want to meet my people, and I'll be back in a short time, because I want to show you round my hometown."

Although I did not feel that I needed much "showing round," since I knew Shanghai fairly well, I agreed to wait for his return. I stood on deck watching the passengers leave the ship and presently, amongst them, the young Chinaman, who was met on the wharf by a group of at least twenty people. I could see they were no ordinary folk. Soon they were swallowed up by the crowd at the dock. I waited and waited for a long time, but still my young friend did not return. I began to get impatient, and ordered my traps to be brought up on deck in order to go ashore.

But just then the young fellow arrived breathless, and with profuse apologies for his delay, asked me to follow him. It appeared that he had gone home with his people

and now had come back in their best limousine to take me as an honoured guest to his father's house.

I found later that the old man was one of the most prominent and wealthy Chinese merchants in Shanghai, and amongst other property owned extensive coal, antimony and wolfram deposits in the interior, for which reason he had made his son take a mining course in the United States. It appeared that the young fellow had told his father how his fellow-passengers had discriminated against him because of his yellow skin, and now the old man, no less than the son, was anxious to show his appreciation of my different attitude.

He had a magnificent idea of hospitality. Then and there, for example, he insisted on giving a luncheon-party in my honour, followed that night by a grand Chinese banquet to which he had bidden about sixty of the most prominent Chinese merchants. In the afternoon of the following day, my young friend's brother-in-law gave a tea-party in his country house, where I met, besides merchants, several Chinese scholars of note and a number of Chinese ladies, most of whom spoke excellent English.

In the evening I dined with the family—that is, with the male members of the household. The old gentleman took great pleasure in showing me his collections of rare Chinese manuscripts, coins and pottery ; and on four long tables in the billiard room were laid out for my inspection scores of large albums containing the photographs he had taken himself on his many trips through China, Mongolia and Manchuria, Korea and Annam.

After these had been duly appreciated, some famous Chinese singers and musicians entertained us until well past midnight. When I subsequently mentioned the names of the performers to a Chinese merchant in Canton he told

me that the performers I had listened to were amongst the most renowned in China, but I cannot say that I enjoyed the concert. I have no ear for music—which is a pity, for I went to school with Kreisler and once the great Pachmann sat down and played for the benefit of my ear alone. But that is another story.

Before retiring that night my host invited me into his study for a nightcap and a last cigarette.

"My son tells me you are a pearl merchant. May I ask whether you have sold out all your stock in America?"

I laughed. "Does any merchant ever sell out completely?"

He smiled, and replied, "Not unless he is forced to liquidate! Good. Then you have stock here with you in Shanghai. If you care to trust me with it for a few hours to-morrow morning with a list of your prices, I will see what I can do with it among my friends. And don't make your prices too low. Those I intend them for can afford to pay for their fancy."

Does any merchant need better encouragement? The prices were not too low; and by ten next morning my host had my list and the whole of my stock in his office. He offered me no receipt, I asked for none. At two o'clock he telephoned me to call at his office again. When I entered he looked very pleased, and said, "I've done good business for you, and sold all your goods at your own price. Of course, you pay commission—business is business, as you English say."

That episode was a big bit of luck for me. But the experience I had in one of the President boats a bit later was of a different order. The stewardess in charge of the library, a buxom and affable young woman who always seemed to guess just the kind of book I wanted to read,

asked me when we touched Kobe whether I would do her a favour since I was going ashore. She could not, and wanted to match a piece of silk which she showed me, mentioning the store. She only needed another three yards, she said, and gave me the money for it. I undertook the gallant commission, found the store, matched the silk, and was just leaving with my purchase under my arm when the young woman herself entered the shop. She explained that at the last minute she had been given leave to come ashore and had come to my assistance in case I shouldn't quite know how to go about this delicate job.

Well, that was all fair and square. But now, instead of the three yards she originally needed, she decided to take twelve—and in a much more expensive quality. In addition she selected six yards of Japanese silk in another shade and twelve yards of heavy Chinese flowered brocade and a few odds and ends of Oriental embroidery. I looked at the slender purse in her hand and wondered how she was going to pay for all these things. She didn't. She asked me to lend her the money till she got back to the ship.

The next day, however, we had another librarian on duty. My young friend had gone, and I never saw her again.

"How much did that slick goil sting you for?" asked my neighbour at table.

"What d'ye mean?" I asked innocently.

"Don't you worry," he grinned. "You're not the only sucker on board. She stuck me for a hundred and fifty dollars worth of silks in Shanghai, and not even a kiss did I get! She is the damndest prim kid on the Pacific run—but her mother keeps a grand silk shop in Seattle, and girly has to keep her in stock!"

I had been inflicted by the chief steward as a cabin-mate

on three American doctors, who had booked a state-room all to themselves and were highly disgusted at my incursion—and let me see it. When I came below to stow my traps I took in the situation, but said nothing. I opened up my grips and laid out on my berth a whole array of the best Philippine cigars. Then casually I remarked, "Gentlemen, help yourselves. There are plenty more where these came from." That broke the ice, and they gradually unfroze.

One was the chief of the American Red Cross in Vladivostok, another an Army doctor, and the third head of the Pharmaceutical Section. But talk about "Physician cure thyself!" Before long one of them began to shiver and cough, then another got the snuffles and the third became feverish too. Between them they were just like a lot of helpless children, and in their united baggage there wasn't as much as a cough lozenge or a square inch of medicated wool. So I, of all people, took these three sick medicos in hand, pumped argyrol into their medical noses and dosed their medical insides from each of my few bottles in turn. They never asked what those bottles contained. I suppose they knew one thing was as good as another, so long as it bore a pharmaceutical label and had a Spanish cork!

CHAPTER XXV

A DREAM AND A MEETING

BACK in Manila I received a letter from my brother, who was in charge of our business in Sulu. The matter was this : "The Philippine Government," he said, "is making strenuous efforts to make this year's Carnival Exhibition in Manila a great success. Every island is to be represented and is to have its own pavilion. The leading merchants from all parts have been invited to co-operate with the Government and send their exhibits in good time, and the Governor of Sulu has paid me a visit and made me promise to supply the pearl shell with which they intend to build the pavilion itself. I have also promised to exhibit a big collection of pearls fished in these parts."

Well, I had no objection. It was a good advertisement. A few weeks later my brother came up to Manila with the Governor of Jolo and we had a conference over the matter. During the interview I had with this official I stipulated that the pearls I should hand over for exhibition purposes must be received by the Government representative only, independently valued, and against a proper receipt. And although he objected that none of the other exhibitors had a Government guarantee for the safe custody of their goods, I finally had my way.

Was my judgment then so keen ? you will ask. Not at all. Only I had been dreaming again. Some weeks earlier I had had a vision—long before my brother had written to me on the subject, or I had thought of exhibitions. In this vision I had seen my brother in most peculiar circumstances

—in a fairy palace built of mother-of-pearl, which stood in the centre of an exotic city, an agglomerate of fantastic buildings neither Gothic nor Byzantine nor Italian baroque, but a composite of each. In this city Chinese pagodas rubbed bricks with Moorish mosques and Muscovite cathedrals. My brother was sitting in the mother-of-pearl palace quite peacefully ; but as I watched him in my dream, it seemed that a great commotion arose in another part of the strange city. Presently I saw a huge flame shoot up and the people in the city fleeing in panic. Before anything could be done all of the buildings were wrapped in flame and smoke. But, as things happen in dreams, I found myself now an actor instead of a spectator ; I took my brother by the arm and led him safely out of the blazing fairy palace. When I awoke I remembered all this perfectly, and the impression was so vivid that before I had received my brother's letter I had already warned him of some impending danger.

When many weeks later the Carnival buildings, constructed of the usual flimsy materials, overtopped the hoardings, I saw the city of my vision, and knew what I knew. I told many people of my dream, and warned them, but they merely laughed. I warned my brother, whose job at this time was in the Pavilion meeting the many strangers who had come from abroad to see the exhibition. He, too, thought I was getting to be a bore with my warnings, but he was sufficiently impressed to promise that if anything should happen he would not try to save the exhibits, but would run for dear life.

The last day but one of the Exhibition came. My friends chaffed me. The people at the hotel teased me and told me I was no good as a prophet and had better stick to my business. They expressed disappointment that the fire hadn't come off.

But at about dinner-time someone called my attention to the sky which looked as though it were on fire. I saw—and knew. I rushed into the street, but as I ran I met my brother coming towards me, carrying a dish of pearls, just as he had snatched it from the stand when the cry of “Fire!” went up. He had intended, he said, to save all and was about to return to the pavilion when he remembered my warning, and ran away instead. And just behind him the burning roof of the pavilion had fallen in. Now he was rushing to tell me he was safe lest I should go and look for him in the burning furnace of the Carnival City and come to grief amongst the frantic crowd. We went back together to the scene of the fire. What I saw resembled in every particular the vision which had been vouchsafed to me. Burning Rome must have looked something like this inferno of smoke and flame.

The Government paid me for all that was lost. Not a single other merchant from any of the islands received a penny piece by way of compensation, and I believe every exhibit proved a total loss.

Of my four years’ residence in Manila, “the Pearl of the Orient,” as the Filipinos fondly refer to the capital of their country, I have many pleasant recollections, but few worth the telling. As all the world ought to know, but doesn’t, the Philippines are not situated somewhere near Cuba or in the West Indies. Its 3,000 islands form, as it were, a bridge between Formosa in the north and British North Borneo in the south. The Filipinos are therefore Asiatics. They really belong to the kingdom of childhood, though they believe themselves grown men. Their beautiful capital, but for its climate, is what it was made by the Spaniards and by the Americans who came after them.

Among the things which I remember best, though why

A DREAM AND A MEETING

I cannot tell, is the fact that our lavendera—or washer-woman—had a son who possessed a rudimentary tail. There is also the memory that the Igorote who brought the eggs to the hotel in the hill-station at Baguio complied fully with the police regulations in that he came to town with his pants under his arm and put them on with an air of ennui just outside the hotel.

This boy belonged to a tribe of dog-eaters. Who could forget the sight of the dog-market in Baguio of a Sunday morning, where the wild hill-men came down their mountain trails leading thin woebegone dogs, not to find a new master or a new home, but as meat “on the hoof”? They say in the Philippines that any dog can scent the dog-eating native and is careful to keep clear of him. But I cannot vouch for the truth of this.

I have often wondered whether the Manilans realise how privileged they are in their gorgeous sunsets, the like of which cannot be seen anywhere else in the tropics. Merely for me to recall them on a London foggy day is sufficient to brighten the outlook.

When the time came for me to bid good-bye to Manila, where nothing matters to-day and everything comes off to-morrow, I hoped it would only be “*au revoir*,” for I had become greatly attached to the islands and the people. However, new vistas opened before me, and it was, as things turned out, a break for good.

One day I left the islands, not to return. I fully intended to take the Indian Ocean route home, but all berths on homeward-bound steamers had been booked months ahead. I sailed on an American liner across the Pacific by way of the Japanese ports, as I had often done before.

Our vessel docked in Yokohama late one evening. The rain was coming down in a solid sheet and none of the

passengers felt much inclined to go ashore. Anyway, we were not due to sail for San Francisco before noon the following day. But next day the rain was still pouring heavily down. The prospect of landing was not in the least enticing. I for one had decided to give Yokohama a miss this time, for I had done all my shopping in Kobe. But half an hour before sailing time, an American lady whom I had not previously noticed came up and spoke to me. She said that she had foolishly put off her shopping until Yokohama and now she could not go ashore, partly because of the rain and partly because of her sick boy in the cabin below. She didn't mind her own shopping, but she had promised a friend in the States to bring her a curio from Japan and did not want to break her word.

She didn't exactly say "Go for me!" outright. But she made me feel that I might well offer to go ashore for her. I looked shorewards. What an awful day! I glanced at my watch—only half an hour to sailing time. Two perfectly good excuses. Still something made me promise to do what I could, though no sooner were the words out of my mouth than I called myself names. But it was too late. She pressed fifty yen into my hand and said, "Don't go beyond that, please, and for the rest anything Japanese will do."

I walked down the slippery gang-plank, and swam rather than walked towards the main street. Glancing desperately to right and left I spied at last a likely shop. I dived into it. The young Japanese woman bade me take a seat and went off to bring some tea. But I called her back and explained that I did not want tea but speedy service. She couldn't understand me. The more I explained the less she saw the point. But at last someone at the far end of the

passage—a European as I now saw—came hastily forward, all civility and attention.

We stared at each other for a moment, both quite speechless. It was quite the most dramatic moment I have ever experienced. The proprietor of the shop grew frightfully pale and had to hold on to the counter for support before he could utter the words, "Is it possible?"

"Yes," said I, "it is me, all right, Baer, but serve me quickly, for I must be gone in less than five minutes. The steamer won't wait for me to deal with you. But don't worry. I'm coming back for you." I bought something or other, paid him, rushed back down the wet street, and got aboard just as the gang-plank was about to be drawn up.

I went down immediately into my state-room and sat for a long time on my bunk. I was quite dazed at what had happened. For how many years had I looked forward to the hour when I should meet that fellow and pay him back for the wrong he had done me? Everything I had been going to say and do to him if I ever got the chance now returned to my mind. I had accomplished none of them. The matter had been taken out of my hands. For though I did return to Yokohama as I had promised, I took no revenge. He gave me, on this occasion, soft words; he was humble, apologetic, full of entreaties that I should not give him away in this place where he had a good business and a fine reputation. He admitted freely that he had made his start with the goods of which he had robbed me, but though he was now a very rich man, he was unwilling to make full restitution. He talked me over until I agreed to accept a tithe of what he owed me.

I was glad later that I had had no part in his undoing. God knows, he paid heavily enough for all the sins he ever

committed. His son, his only child, for whom he had slaved throughout the years, turned out to be not only a good-for-nothing, but also a homosexual fiend; in the earthquake his shop and all in it disappeared altogether, though he escaped with his life; his investments abroad, which still represented a considerable fortune, he had turned into German marks when they seemed a good investment, and with the crash of that currency he lost all he had been at so much roguery and pains to gather; finally he lost his eyesight and died of a cancer in the stomach.

But while all this lay as yet hidden in the bosom of time, I sped onward to America, spent a glorious week in California and another in New York amongst good friends, and, not having as yet sampled any of the big transatlantic liners, booked on the *Aquitania* to take me home.

Back in London again for the first time since the war. A few weeks of rest; what next?

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SHIFTING SCENE

NEXT, as it turned out, was Hong-Kong, which for various reasons was to be my headquarters for the next five years. And so, after a short holiday in England I found myself once more in the Far East.

My first concern after deciding to make Hong-Kong my distributing centre was, of course, the renting of an office. It was, however, no easy matter to secure suitable premises in the best business part of the town because of the building restrictions which had been in force here as elsewhere during the period of the war. Old buildings were coming down on all sides and new ones were in course of rapid construction. But as fast as these new offices were ready for occupation, the well-to-do Cantonese snapped them up, preferring the security conferred by British rule to the dangers of civil war which just then threatened the two provinces of Kwantung and Kwangsi.

A week had nearly gone by without my being able to locate anything that could be made to serve my purpose, even temporarily. I sat on the verandah of my apartment at the Hong-Kong Hotel, worn out with the heat of the day and the toils of my quest. The boy who had just served me with tea returned and announced that a Chinese man was below in the hall who wished to see me on urgent business. I bade the boy bring the man up. A knock at the door and there entered a burly Chinaman, dressed in the long flowing coat of Chinese respectability. He was above medium height, of powerful build and in the prime

of life. From an extraordinarily big head peeped remarkably intelligent eyes. His voice as he greeted me in good English sounded deep and pleasant to the ear. I received at once the impression of an unusual man, a man of innate force and strength, and of superior intelligence, one within whom the idealist was battling fiercely and continually with the grosser passions.

He handed me his business card. I asked him to be seated and to partake of tea. When he had presented his credentials and stated his case I had learnt that he had been established in business in Canton and Hong-Kong and had failed, that he had got another start as agent for a big London firm for whom he had been doing well until Doctor Sun Yat Sen, who had known him from youth, bade him relinquish the pursuit of money to devote his life to the great cause which the ex-President of China had so deeply at heart. The Doctor had carried him off his feet. He had given up the agency in order to take up the duties of secretary to the self-styled President of South China. But the President of South China had small funds at his disposal just then and frequently his secretary's wages were not forthcoming. Doctor Sun Yat Sen himself, at that time, my visitor told me, only owned one pair of boots—those he wore—and could not understand why Hung, his secretary, should be anxious to secure creature comforts beyond those that contented his chief. So with great regret Hung had left the cause to return to commerce.

My visitor knew the business that had brought me to Hong-Kong, and since on two previous occasions he had for a short time been employed by Amsterdam diamond merchants as interpreter, he was quite sure he could render me good service. He was quite willing to be paid by

results, that is by the customary commission on all business introduced by him. But I said that if the references he could furnish proved satisfactory I would not merely make him my interpreter, but my compradore. However, I was at present minus an office and it did not seem likely that I should be suited in that way for some weeks to come.

"Leave this matter to me, sir," he said. And when he had written out the names of the Chinese and European merchants in town to whom I could refer, he bowed himself out.

His references proved excellent, and before noon next day he came to see me again. He had secured offices, he said, and would I go with him to see them for myself? He took me to a Chinese stockbroker who, like himself, spoke good English and whose offices consisted of three large rooms, handsomely furnished. Two of these rooms, I was told by the stockbroker, I could have all to myself and the third which he himself occupied I could share too since there were several desks in it. If I cared I could also make use of one of the big safes and share in the telephone.

I asked what the rent would be. "Rent?" said the Chinese stockbroker. "I never gave that a thought. You see, I am not renting these rooms out for money, but to please my friend here—and now that I've met you," he added with Eastern politeness, "I would let you have them for your own sake. No, I don't want any rent."

"But, my dear sir," I said, "this means that you are not doing me a favour at all. You are just keeping me out, because I could never consent to come in without feeling that I had a right to come and go."

But I had the greatest difficulty in the world in making him accept even a nominal rental, though at last he gave in out of deference to my feelings. An hour later I was

installed, and by next day my brass plate told all passers-by, in Chinese and English, what I wanted them to know.

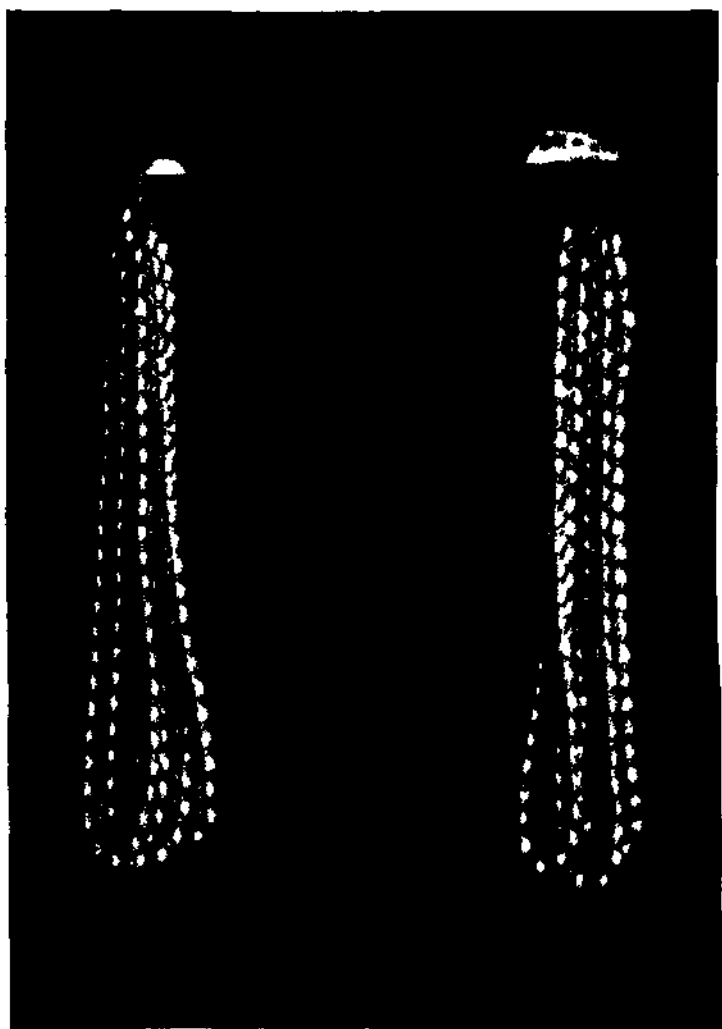
Before the brass plate could be put in hand, however, Hung and my new stockbroker friend had to put their heads together and translate my European surname into Chinese ; so it was that from then on I became Mr. Kong Li Tsa.

My stockbroker landlord sat at his desk facing mine, nibbled at his pen and said, " Of course, I must buy a diamond from you for good luck. It is the custom, you know, so if you have anything in a three-carat size, blue-white, for a ring, I'll buy it."

I showed him a stone. He remarked, " If that is what you recommend I'll take it, but you must charge me the full price and allow yourself a handsome profit, because this sale will determine your luck and mine whilst we share this office."

He counted out 6,000 dollars with as much glee as if he had been the seller. As it turned out, both he and I had a great run of good luck the whole time we were together. His clients were the big Chinese firms in Hong-Kong, Swatow, Amoy and Foochow, and whenever any one of them made a killing he obliged them to invest a portion of their gain in diamonds ; and those who had bad luck in a deal or two he assured that his lucky ring-stone, purchased from me, was at the bottom of the success he himself was having, so that they, too, being superstitious to a degree, bought sizeable stones for good luck. Good luck for me at any rate !

One day the rich daughter-in-law of a very great American public man passed through Hong-Kong. She had picked up a number of pearls on her trip through the Philippines, but she was short of eight pearls for the centre



TWO DOUBLE ROWS OF PERFECTLY MATCHED PEARLS.

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to make them into an important necklace. She came to see me and I agreed to supply what was wanting, and also to have her pearls and those I supplied drilled, graduated and strung. What I supplied constituted, as it happened, a perfect match. If I had searched for them in London and Paris I could not have done better ; nor could I have found a ninth pearl in my stock to match the rest.

The goldsmith to whom I entrusted the job of drilling broke the steel drill in the first large pearl. He did the same to the second, and then became so nervous and excited that he took a nip of whisky out of a handy bottle to steady himself. But instead it made him leave a quarter of his steel drill in the third and fourth large pearls. Then I bade him stop and drill no more. But by this time he had had several nips and offered to fight me unless I left him alone to finish the job properly.

" You'll finish me before you're done. There's already ten thousand dollars worth made useless by you, and I don't know how the steel pieces can be got out."

He finished the job properly. When every single one of the eight pearls was laid on the jeweller's bench with a cold steel dagger embedded in its pink body, the befuddled goldsmith, a Cockney, said with a drunken leer, " They'll—be—a—right—a—right," and fell fast asleep where he sat.

I picked up my poor pearls and walked out with a great headache. I had no idea what I should say to the great lady when she called in a day or so for her necklace. The worst of it was she had paid me for the eight pearls and could claim of me now anything she had a mind to. Then I remembered that I had met on the steamer coming out an electrical engineer who had just joined an important concern in Hong-Kong. I jumped at once into a fast car and drove

to the works. There I explained my predicament and suggested that my electrical friend should place the pearls under their most powerful electro-magnet in order to extract the steel.

Nearly every engineer at the works gathered round us, while he busied himself with the job. But the pieces of steel were buried deep and stuck fast. Then the engineer as a last resort offered to drill the pearls from the opposite side and force or drill out the steel. He confessed he had never done anything of the kind before, but I accepted eagerly at my own risk. My confidence was justified. He succeeded perfectly with every piece of the eight. It was amazing the precision with which he found the right spot, so that when drilled the pearl should ride true on the silk. When the lady called for her string of beads, I felt like telling her of the adventures her pearls had passed through, but lest she think they were the worse for these experiences I desisted.

When she was in my office this same lady admired a set of antique Chinese panels on my wall representing the four seasons, skilfully inlaid with ivory, rose quartz and Chinese jade.

"How much for these?" she inquired, pointing to the panels.

"I'm sorry, madam," I said, "they are not for sale."

"I am sorry for you," the lady remarked, "but I've set my heart on them and I shall buy them. I'll send my husband to see you to-morrow."

When my stockbroker landlord returned from 'Change I told him that I could have sold his panels. He replied, "Why didn't you?"

"How could I sell your property," I protested. "Do

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you really want to let them go, and how much would you take ? ”

He mentioned a price and left it to me to sell and pocket the difference. “ If you get me what I paid for them, since I know that my dealer stung me over them, I shall stand you a Chinese dinner at the best Chinese restaurant, to which I shall also ask ten of my Chinese friends and you shall invite ten Europeans. ”

True to the lady's threat, her husband turned up in the morning.

“ Where are the panels my wife fancied ? ” he said with abrupt directness. “ You'll have to sell them to me, my friend, or life won't be worth living with her ! ”

Of course, I was most reluctant to sell, but, as a great—a very great—favour, I parted with them in the end, at a price. We had our banquet, my stockbroker friend and I. And the next day I gave instructions to an antique dealer to find me a set of four identical panels to console my own wife for my absence from home, and to invest what I had made over the deal. In due course my dealer found them and I shipped them home. Now when I set out for the city in the morning they remind me that it isn't wise to tell your dealer you want a thing so badly that you can't live without it !

My stockbroker introduced me to a Chinese banker. This banker bought diamonds as you might peanuts. The bigger they were the better he liked them. He was all for size. As he assured me that he only bought on days on which he had pulled off a profitable deal, he must have had at one time, during a period of eighteen months, four good days a week. They were good days for me too.

I was a daily visitor at the banker's office, and always made straight for his private room. If he was busy, I sat down and smoked his Havanas till he could attend to me. One day I had thus been sitting for some time when three Englishmen entered, without ceremony. I thought it was strange, their manner of coming in without a word, drifting here and there, opening cupboards and prying into this corner and that while the banker stood by his chair with folded arms letting them have their way. Then one of the Englishmen addressed me rather rudely, I thought, and asked me what business I had there. I remained calmly seated on my barrel-shaped stool and told him to go to blazes and mind his own business, unless he could show reason why I should answer.

He showed me his authority. He was, it seemed, a detective. So I gave him my card.

"Oh," he said, "I've heard of you all right. I'm sorry to worry you, but we're not here for fun."

"It doesn't look like it," I replied, and turned my back on him.

After a while the three detectives left, and when they had gone all the banker's clerks came into the boss's room. There was a hullabaloo of jabbering in Chinese, which of course I couldn't understand; but a gleeful rubbing of hands all round told me that somehow the banker had scored and not the police. But what it was all about I had not the faintest idea. And I went away still in the dark.

Next day, however, true to my habit, I called on my banker friend again. I sat in my usual seat on the high barrel-shaped stool. But I didn't ask any questions, although my mind was seething with them, for having lived amongst Chinese for so many years I had learnt not

to be inquisitive and to mind my own business. I was given a big cigar and a drink ; then after a moment I was bidden by my host to come off my perch. Wondering, I did so.

He touched a button on the upper edge of the stool and gave the top a twist, lifting the lid. Then pointing into the capacious hollow in the wood he said smilingly, " Opium ! And yesterday you sat on it—good man !—all the time those bad Englishmen sniffed around."

But if yesterday the stool had been full of opium, to-day it was all gone. The banking business in China is a paying game. With all his astuteness, however, my banker friend lost out in the end. He went to Europe for a long trip and spent three months in Italy purchasing works of art. He returned with scores of crates and packing-cases full of what he thought was Italy's best. But during his absence his brother had played the Exchange and broken the firm. He didn't grumble or complain. That is not the Chinese way. All he said when I came to see him was, " I've bought so much from you in good times—now buy something from me. I've no use now for these works of art." So I picked on a marble, a ragged urchin seated on a chair weeping over a dead bird. It is a beautiful thing. But when I look at it I think of more than art. I remember my banker friend and my opium seat in his office !

Hung, my comradore, was untiring. He knew everybody worth while in Hong-Kong and Canton, and, in fact, in the whole of South China. He had organised what amounted almost to a secret service. If anywhere in South China a wealthy or well-to-do man was about to give his daughter in marriage or take unto himself an additional concubine, Hung knew of it and saw to it that some of my

goods should be included in the dower. Whenever he said, "Let us go to so and so this morning," I knew that everything was cut and dried. When he was with me I never lost a deal, but he didn't speak much. He simply allowed me to display my diamonds the while he sipped cups of weak tea and nibbled at melon seeds. Every now and then, when addressed by the prospective customer, he would say a word or two; and if the customer wavered, he would gather the goods under review and hand them to the party with a dictatorial gesture and bid him or her part with their money gracefully, or else what would the big English merchant think of the Chinese?

There were, on the other hand, certain days when I could not move him to keep an appointment because he had found out in some Chinese almanac that it was an unpropitious day. I was never allowed to disregard the warnings of the stars.

Hung was as good a trencherman as he was untiring worker, and when I took him out to lunch the waiters couldn't serve him as fast as he could eat. He always started with stewed fish, followed by baked, and these he smothered with three or four bowls of rice. An extra large underdone steak was his invariable dessert, and of that he made six mouthfuls. By the time I had got through my first and often my only course, he was already toying with his toothpick.

He had read widely and was well-informed on current topics, yet I never saw him look at a newspaper. His great hobby was phonetics. He had made a deep study of them and had invented a system of shorthand. In fact, it was more than that. It was a method of recording with pencil on paper any kind of sound—the spoken word in any language, the sighing of the wind, the flutter of a leaf, the

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chirping of birds, the hum of a bee, the footfall on stone or wood, the slamming of a door, the drawing of a cork, the swish of a lady's dress, and all so faithfully that he who had mastered his system could write the sounds down and not only read them, but utter them unerringly as the gramophone disc yields up the graven music to the prompting needle. If the system had not been demonstrated to me time and again I should not have believed it possible. He spoke no foreign language except English. I dictated to him a hotchpotch in French, German, Spanish, Viennese argot, and Yiddish, with a few Malay words and meaningless sounds thrown in. He took them all down as fast as I could utter them. Then he sent for his daughter, a girl of sixteen whom he had trained in his method, and handed her the pad. She read it off as I had delivered it, with every shade of inflection I had given to the words. And in so far as my pronunciation was correct in the language spoken, you couldn't have known that any of the words did not proceed from the lips of its national.

But he did not intend this ingenious sound-recording system of his to remain a mere plaything. He had devised it primarily, he said, to do away with the cumbersome symbolic signwriting of his people, which in his opinion was the greatest stumbling-block to the spread of knowledge amongst them. The President of South China and several of his intimates had learnt the system, and Doctor Sun Yat Sen had promised that as soon as other and more pressing matters were got out of the way he would make the learning of Hung's tone-writing compulsory in the province of Kwantung first, and then, heaven willing, throughout the whole of China.

To my knowledge Hung spent the greater portion of his earnings on propaganda for this epoch-making system of

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his ; and had he lived for another ten years he might have seen it adopted in all Chinese schools, with results too far-reaching for me even to guess at. Even so, I hold that in centuries to come my one-time compradore may be spoken of as one of China's greatest sons.

CHAPTER XXVII

A BILL ON ETERNITY

A CHINESE jeweller sent for me. He needed eighty diamonds, each to scale approximately a carat and all to be of the same tint and quality. A big man in town had sixteen wives, he said, to each of whom he had to give five stones for some ornament, and he couldn't afford to offend any of them by giving better gifts to some than to others.

I had in my wallets what was wanted, and I daresay no other dealer in the East could have supplied them. The jeweller did not intend to buy himself, but to submit the goods to his customer for inspection. I was perfectly willing to let him have them for this purpose, but the Chinaman haggled over the price and I came away at last without leaving the goods. Twice more he sent for me, and each time he discussed prices when there was no question of his buying.

Then, one day as I passed his shop, he came out into the street and called me in. But I would not. But while I yet stood a Chinaman richly dressed in silks came out of the shop and got into his sedan chair. His chair-coolies lifted him to their shoulders and strode off. I walked on slowly after them, and at the next turning the richly dressed Chinaman stood waiting for me, gave me his Chinese visiting card on which was pencilled in English "Kom-seme," and went off without more ado.

I went to see him. It was the gentleman of the sixteen wives. And he bought my goods without cavil, only insisting on the cash discount. For years that lordly China-

man bought parcels of diamonds from me every week. My mean jeweller must have felt sick about it, but he didn't show it, for your Chinaman will not have you read his face. I know how I should have felt, and the Chinese are no different from us in essentials.

There was, and maybe there still is, a certain Chinese store in a certain Hong-Kong street whose owners spoke fair pidgin. My compradore had introduced me to them, and from the day of our first meeting the partners were my good friends. They were land and estate agents, and their office was the rendezvous, not only of every propertied Chinaman, but also of the Komintern politicians—Doctor Sun Yat Sen's party. There I met at one time or another on friendly terms all the Canton men who mattered; cabinet ministers, those in office, those that had been in office, and those still to come into power, generals, fighting men, bandit-chiefs and political grafters.

I was always able to tell how much squeeze a political stunt had yielded to the one or the other by the size of the diamonds they bought of me. In all the time I was at Canton only one man bought no brilliants from me—he who had sent the Manchus packing and is now laid to rest in Tientsin with clean hands and a broken heart.

It was inevitable that sooner or later some of that political crowd should come to me with a proposition of a certain kind. Rifles and ammunition were needed badly, because the South was at war with the North. There was plenty of ammunition and as many rifles as China could do with in nearly every country in Europe, particularly in Germany. Those who had the buying knew I could be trusted with the funds and wanted me to charter a steamer in Hamburg to load and proceed straight up the Pearl River to Canton

without touching Hong-Kong or any other port on the way out. The profit was enormous, more than could be earned in three years of ordinary trading. But that was not my idea of things, and I declined with thanks.

I now made frequent trips to Canton by rail, some 150 miles from Kowloon on the Chinese mainland, which is on the other side of the bay from Hong Kong ; or a night's journey by steamer. I always preferred the trip by water, if for nothing else than the marvellous sight of the house-boats which stretch for miles and many rows deep on the waters of the Pearl River, like the streets of a mighty city. It is said that one-third of Canton's population of six million souls lives on the River. These half aquatic citizens hardly ever leave their homes to go ashore. Their whole lives are spent afloat, and they can hardly conceive of another sort of existence.

A young Chinaman, a small private customer of mine, came to see me with a strange request. His wife's uncle, an aged and fabulously rich Mandarin who had recently made his home in Hong-Kong, had not proved as generous as his numerous nephews and nieces could wish. They had discussed the matter amongst themselves and had decided that it would not be a bad plan if on the old man's birthday, when they would as usual all be entertained by him, I were to be introduced to his presence. I could then show my wares and the nephews and nieces would, after a decent interval, prevail upon their good uncle to buy diamonds for them. I thought it rather an odd way of getting business ; but more because I wanted to meet the old man, who had held office under the Dowager Empress, than to peddle my goods to an unwilling purchaser, I agreed to attend if I should be sent for on the appointed day.

When the day came round, the nephew by marriage

duly came to call for me and took me to the old man's house. When we arrived a very large party of affectionate relatives had also turned up. The old gentleman received me very kindly. He had no idea what I had come for, but just thought that I was a European friend of one of his nephews. After tea, the fond nieces asked me to entertain the old gentleman with a sight of my glittering baubles, which, of course, I had about me.

I can see the scene now: the aged Mandarin, in his birthday best, warmed by something stronger than tea and in great good humour, surrounded by a bevy of exceedingly pretty Chinese girls and young women; behind them, nephews, great nephews and cousins to the *n*th degree. The old gentleman sat down and I opposite him with my wallets upon the table between us, and Hung my comrade by my side. The aged Mandarin thought it was a free show, all arranged for his birthday party. He gurgled and chuckled as he toyed with the sparkling stones, holding them this way and that against the strong light. His favourite niece, a girl in her teens, made some remark in Chinese and then the other nieces and nephews chimed in. That pulled him up! He stopped chuckling, looked grave and put the glittering baubles from him. I asked Hung to tell me what was being said, but instead of interpreting, he winked at me and whispered, "The old boy has taken fright!"

However, the young thing kept talking volubly to the victim, while she picked up the stones from the table where he had laid them and held one and then another to her pretty ears. No doubt she was showing him how nice they would look on her and persuading him to buy them for her. But I could see the thought in his mind. If he bought for one he must buy for all, and there was such a

mob of affectionate relatives around him. At last he made a determined stand, and told Hung to thank me for having shown the pretty things to him, but to say that in a very long life he had never spent his money on such trifles and wouldn't begin now.

Then Hung took a hand in the business. I did not understand what was being said, but after a while he interpreted, "The old gentleman says he must make best use of his money in this life, and if he bought from you at all you would have to look for payment in the next life."

Then said I, "Tell His Excellency from me that he may do me the favour of choosing whatever he likes out of my poor stock. I shall not expect him to pay me now. But I shall write on the bill when I make it out that the amount is payable by him to me in the life beyond the grave."

Hung interpreted word for word, with the utmost unconcern as though I had mentioned terms perfectly in keeping with sane business methods. The nieces and nephews clapped their hands for joy. But the old gentleman seemed at first staggered by my prompt acceptance of his terms. At length he assented to the deal, and the favourite niece started the ball rolling by choosing a pair of brilliants she coveted for earrings. He asked the price, and I stated it. There was no point in bargaining now, when the price was payable in eternity, so he merely nodded and handed the diamonds to the girl. The other nieces in turn then collected what they thought was their good right. All I had now to do was to dole out the diamonds much in the manner a shooting-gallery proprietor at a country fair hands out coconuts to the winners. When every niece was supplied I made out the account in duplicate and stated the

terms: "Payable in the next life." Hung translated and made the old Mandarin sign my copy.

When we came away Hung said to me, "This is the first really foolish thing I have seen you do."

"Why then," I demanded, "did you not stop me from making an ass of myself?"

"And when shall I get my commission?" said Hung, shaking his head.

Two days went by. The telephone rang. Hung took the message. "The old mandarin wants you to come to his place without fail this afternoon. I wonder whether he wants to buy some more. Don't you go. I'll go myself and see what it's all about."

"No, Hung," I replied, "you shan't go without me."

The aged Mandarin looked woefully jaded and much older than when I had last seen him. He came straight to the point. He had not slept for two nights and was afraid he'd never have another night's quiet rest. What business had the foreign gentleman to sell him goods on such terms? He who had always paid his just debts, was he to go out of this life into the life beyond with a millstone round his neck? How did he know himself that he would have the money in the next life to pay me, since he would not be able to take along what he had? Had I the receipt? And if I had not brought it, would I get it at once, for he was going to pay cash then and there, at any rate before sunset, for that night he *would* sleep. . . .

After he had paid me he asked what had made me do such an unheard of thing. I replied, that when the honourable gentleman had declared he would buy if he could pay in the next life, I knew that he believed in an after life. Therefore I considered the credit safe. Besides, I had been

pretty sure that he would want to get rid of his debt before very long.

The old Mandarin shook his finger at me and made a smiling remark. If Hung interpreted correctly, he said, "What better things can money buy than affection and wisdom?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

GHOSTS

I SOON tired of Hong-Kong's premier hotel. The service was good, but the food placed before me was not worth the display of fine napery and electro-plate. So I moved half-way up the Peak, where the air was purer and cooler.

My verandah looked out upon the funicular railway track, and sitting there with a good book and an arcadia-filled pipe I could never be lonely. Though I sought no other company besides the characters in the books I read, and the folk who travelled past my porch in the cages of the funicular, I had to put up with an invading army of feathered intruders. At first they kept their distance and were rather shy. Then a few, it appeared, were detailed off to study my character ; to find out whether I was vicious, given to prowling and pouncing upon unsuspecting birds. The report made on me was evidently good, for in a day or so the whole bird population in the neighbourhood was sitting on the wide stone balustrade, singing their loudest and preening their feathers with the greatest unconcern. They looked with some amazement at the shirt-sleeved biped who swallowed such huge crumbs of buttered toast and cake at one gulp, and coveted their share.

I thought the musicians deserved some pay, although they were not up-to-date jazzers, and threw them some crumbs. Before long I had to set aside half of my portion of toast and cake every afternoon. No less was expected, in all fairness, and even so, I realised that it wasn't fair even now—for I was only one and they were countless !

In time my guests became so tame that they hopped around my feet ; the more venturesome came on to the table, and if I happened to be late for tea they'd sit on the backs of my chairs in the room itself waiting for me to turn up. I was greatly surprised one day to find as I walked up the steeply inclined road which led to my house that some birds were hopping in front of me, and some behind, to all intents an *avant* and an *arrière garde*. My feathered friends must have thought I was a long time coming and had sent a deputation to meet me and escort me safely to the porch ! I was so pleased that I served them before I poured out my tea.

The fantails were particularly friendly, and but for one thing I should have preferred them to any of my other guests. The burden of their song was a distinct "pity you—pity you" through the whole gamut of tones—sweet, sympathetic "pity yous" for me who had no wings and could not fly, and sterner "pity yous" for the tummy-ache I should get for gobbling up more than my share of buttered toast and cake. Their "pity yous" finally made me cross, for I was unwilling to be ceaselessly pitied.

One afternoon when the crowd sat expectantly on the balustrade, and before I had lifted the cover from my dish of toast, I judged it opportune to address them thus : "Friends, you've been pitying me for a long while now, and I resent being an object of your, or anyone's, pity. If you're pitying me because I have to share my little with the many of you, don't remind me of it so often, or I'll harden my heart. What you ought to say, I think, is 'pity us.'"

The fantails listened attentively to my harangue, and not a head or a wing stirred until I had done speaking. I know I shall not be believed for saying that thereafter, and for as

long as I stayed at that house, they sang "Pity us ! Pity us !"

But the day soon came when all of us white men in Hong-Kong were to be pitied. Political agitators in Canton fanned the flame of discontent amongst the Chinese labourers in the colony, and one fine morning when we got up we found that all the boys had deserted their posts. Throughout the colony not a Chinese man or woman would stay in any foreigner's service. Even the amahs left the white children who were their charges. Then all the factory workers and shop assistants came out too, with the clerks, and even the public utility services came to a standstill.

At first it was great fun doing things for yourself, but as the days wore on it became plain to all of us who were engaged in business that one could not be a maid of all work from sunrise to mid-day, a merchant from one to six in the evening, and then go on patrol during the night. But how splendidly the white men in Hong-Kong behaved during that strike, relying on themselves instead of on Government action, is on record for those who care to read. Although virtually it cost every merchant in Hong-Kong two valuable weeks of his time, I, for one, do not regret the experience. For I discovered great qualities in my fellow men where I least expected to find them, and also meanness, selfishness and greed in people I had till then held in esteem—besides learning what a handful of determined men can do !

A young American journalist, a free-lance who arrived on the second day of the strike, amused me with the readiness with which on the first morning he allowed himself to be pressed into service as a dishwasher and then immediately turned his experience to account by writing an article on

the humorous aspect of the strike. This appeared in a Hong-Kong daily paper and brought him sufficient to move on to Manila when his dishwashing days were over. So the strike was a godsend to at least one person.

About that time, I saw ghosts. They were not Chinese ghosts, but European. Of course, I've been told that I imagined the thing—suffered from hallucinations or, better still, was blind drunk at the time. Well, there can scarcely be anywhere a more abstemious man than I—so the "drunk" part of the argument may be dismissed. I cannot swear that I had no hallucination, because strictly speaking no man can prove such even to himself.

The matter may seem trivial, but as it was the only experience of the kind I ever had, I set it down for what it may be worth, and as a testimony to the existence of the supernatural around us.

Owing no doubt to the fact that some of the self-styled generals in South China had been forced to disband their followers, there was now a considerable influx into the colony of a most undesirable element, which for want of employment turned to crime as a means of subsistence. It was no uncommon thing to read in the papers of hold-ups in a part of the city which had hitherto been exempt from the attention of such desperate fellows—that section which was almost exclusively inhabited by Europeans.

It was therefore more than foolish of me to walk home from the office late one evening with a small fortune of diamonds on my person, simply to enable me to keep an early appointment next day. The road I had to take, and there was no other, led alongside the funicular railway track, and was very lonely at all times, because the gradient was steep and most folk preferred to wait, for that reason, fifteen or twenty minutes for a train. There was one par-

ticular corner which at the best of times made me pass it at a pretty fast pace. Not only was there something eerie about the spot, but I always felt that if one were attacked there one would stand very little chance of attracting the attention of the people in the buildings high up on the slope. It would have been an easy matter for a couple of footpads to conceal themselves until one was quite close to them, jump out, do their fell work, and cast one dead or half-dead down a ravine where it might take days or weeks to find one's body.

On this particular evening I had a premonition that all was not well just before I reached the corner in question, and I had half a mind to turn back and wait for the train, although I was then within a minute's walk of my gate. Then it occurred to me that if indeed anyone should be lurking round the corner, he must by now be aware of my approach, and if I turned back he would follow me rather than lose his chance. So I walked on with firm step, whistling to myself for company.

I turned the corner, and in the pale moonlight I saw two shadows detach themselves from an abutment and come straight at me. They were a couple of ragged Chinese, evil-looking and evil-intending. Not a soul was in sight or within hearing distance. The best I could hope for was that they wouldn't finish me off altogether. At any rate I was prepared to give up what I carried without a fight; and I soon found that my decision to offer no resistance was good sense, for a third ruffian appeared from behind a mound of earth where he must have been lying flat on the ground.

Then, when my case seemed utterly hopeless, two exceptionally tall Europeans appeared from heaven knows where—literally, heaven knows, perhaps. They were clad in

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strangely old-fashioned garb. Neither I nor the three robbers could have heard them come from behind, nor did they speak to each other. There was not a sound except the beating of my own heart. The Chinese stood aside to let them pass through their midst and I followed close behind the two, too overcome to accost them. When I came within ten yards of my house I determined to come up with them and warn them against taking this road singly after sunset. But they were not to be seen. Although I had seen them a second before, right in front of me, and they could not possibly have taken a turning because there was none on either side of us, they had vanished. If these two were flesh and blood and bone, they must have known of a stone slab in the wall that turned on well-balanced silent hinges. And from then on I never passed the spot without trying to discover the secret, if secret it was, of that wall. But I never believed I should find it, and find it I did not.

CHAPTER XXIX

CHINESE JADE

ON the rare occasions when I visited any outlandish city on sightseeing expeditions, I saw nothing worth while ; but whenever business took me among the Chinese people not only did I discover for myself the kind of beings I had come amongst, but the very stones of their shops and dwellings came to life and spoke to me. Everything assumed a different aspect, perhaps because I myself became a real part of the bustle and movement.

Thus when on successive pleasure excursions I made the short trip to Canton, all I saw was a muddy, sluggish watercourse, covered for miles with floating hovels large and small, an unhallowed city of narrow, mean, evil-smelling streets filled with a jostling noisy crowd of yellow pig-tailed pedestrians swathed in vermin-ridden rags, itinerant vendors of tit-bits revolting alike to sight and scent, sweating, acrid chair-coolies and half-naked urchins, the spume of plaguey slums.

But when in due course I came again to South China's most populous city in quest of trade and was called upon to pit my cunning against its traders in gems and semi-precious stones, had sat amongst them, partaken of their rough and ready, or it might be more elaborate, hospitality, had conferred upon me the freedom of their social clubs, had watched them in the counting-house, in the workshop amongst their kith and kin, or as "master and man," what a transformation in the scenes I saw !

The muddy, sluggish watercourse became the mighty

onrushing Pearl River, the floating hovels became homes, the unhallowed city a hive of human industry, the mean and narrow streets an archaic curiosity, the noisy crowd human beings with virtues, vices, lusts and passions; the very rags on their backs were sublimated by the poverty they so patiently bore, the tit-bits displayed on the perambulating stalls merely testified to man's variegated palate for queer foods, the sour-smelling coolies were now seen to be just what they were—tired men—and the bare-bellied youngsters now seemed but a nose-dripping variety of cherub. And over all this life seemed to brood the benevolent spirit of the great sage Kong-Fu-Tze.

It so happened that I began to take a keen practical interest in the semi-precious stone known to all the world as Chinese jade. Now Chinese jade is really not Chinese at all. But for thousands of years the people of China have seen beauty in it and have made use of it for their personal adornment. There is no jade mined in China; it all comes from either Tibet or India, much of it by way of Rangoon. It is an exceedingly hard mineral and difficult to cut and polish, but the Chinese had early mastered the art and even in classical ages had carved it into figures, trinkets and vases. Canton in the South and Soochow in the North have for some reason monopolised the cutting, polishing and carving of Chinese jade just as the cities of Amsterdam and Antwerp with us have monopolised the cutting and polishing of diamonds.

Chinese jade is of various colours and grades. The bulk is white, slate-grey, bluish or greenish grey, and not of great value on account of its colour and opaqueness. The green jade is the jade used for jewellery and fine carvings, and no one but he who has bought jade for years for the purpose of trading in it can have any conception how many

shades of green there are. The ideal colour is the pure apple-green, but it must not be a heavy dense sated green. Between this and the lustrous translucent treasured green there lies a whole world of shades which leave the connoisseur cool.

There is also a blue jade—the Imperial Blue, so called because that particular shade was highly prized by the Emperors of China. Justly so, for it was so rare that only a few pieces of the kind are known. I saw one such piece which had been looted from the Summer Palace at Peking by a Japanese soldier during the Boxer rising, and would have given a very long price had the owner been willing to part with it.

I don't think I am guilty of exaggeration when I say that scarcely a Chinese woman or girl throughout the whole of the country but possesses one or two jade ornaments, be it only a clasp for the hair, a hairpin, earrings or bracelet. With the poorer folk, the jade used is, of course, of very inferior quality, but jade all must have for good luck; and also pearls, albeit of a grade to correspond. Nowhere in all my travels have I come across a people who appreciate and love pearls more than the Chinese. Not only are their goldsmiths keen judges of values, but the average Chinese woman is also an expert in jades and pearls—that is, of the kind within her reach.

Since the brilliant has become popular amongst them during the last forty years or so, they have also learned to discriminate between poor, good and the best diamonds. If the Chinese men are ready to invest their savings in brilliants it is to their womenfolk that they leave the close inspection of and the bargaining for these stones. Few of the homes of the well-to-do but can produce a pair of diamond scales and pincettes and a strong magnifying glass.

I was greatly astonished at first to see this. There is invariably one of the ladies of the household who is recognised by the other members of the family as "the" expert and she scrutinises closely whatever one submits, offers like a merchant, and stands by her offer when her price is accepted, even if she should discover that she has made a mistake. I have come across many Chinese ladies whose judgment on values was as good as any Hatton Garden dealer's and who were as businesslike as one would imagine the head of any big city firm to be.

In a Chinese home woman is the boss—but only one woman, though there may be more than a dozen wives and concubines. As long as mother is there she rules the roost; when she dies, the number one wife is virtual dictator, but she in her turn is ruled with a rod of iron by her own amah—her childhood nurse turned lady's maid. I have known many deals where the amah insisted on *cumsha* (or rake-off) in return for her neutrality.

My incomparable compradore Hung maintained that their hair-dresser had greater influence with the ladies than even the amahs, and long before he took me by appointment to the houses of the great he had paved the way by small gifts and greater promises to the hairdresser. This woman, during the hour or so of her ministrations, would discourse freely on the latest gossip and it was easy enough to introduce news of the marvellous values to be had from the recently arrived English diamond merchant. At any rate, these hairdressers who visited from house to house daily knew of all that went on: birthdays, anniversaries, forthcoming engagements or marriages—all very useful information for the trader in my kind of goods.

But I began my dealings in Chinese jade for the sake of a very different clientèle. During the years of the Great

War, and for several years after, many thousands of American tourists visited China, and it was more or less because of them that I saw profit in the trade. The local goldsmiths in Hong-Kong invariably marked their jade prices up by 200 per cent. as soon as a boatload of American tourists was let loose upon the town. Knowledge of this soon spread, and since no American who had visited China dared return to his home town without bringing back some Chinese jade, I began to receive commissions to buy for them. Subsequently orders from America itself came to me direct, at first from private individuals and then from jewellers and wholesale firms all over the States, with the result that I had to buy while the going was good, and buying for my own account meant closer attention to my margin of profit and greater wariness lest I be let in for rubbish. Gradually and painfully indeed I learnt to hold my own with the Chinese dealers.

Then I took it into my head to make a few trial shipments to several European centres. The stone caught on, probably because others too were making the same venture ; besides, green—whether emerald or jade—was in great demand at that time. I received cabled orders for quantities I could never hope to supply from Hong-Kong, and thus were initiated my frequent pilgrimages to Canton and Soochow in search of the lovely green stone.

I have a vivid recollection of the manner in which I filled the first big order for Paris. I arrived in Canton early one morning and spent the whole day amongst the jade cutters and dealers. I had bought thousands of pieces of jade, for the most part sewn on pads Chinese fashion (to show them off to the best advantage). On returning to the European concession of Shameen my chairmen were asked by the policeman at the bridge whence they had come.

They mentioned the district. The policeman then turned to me and asked if I had not seen the warning, which had been posted everywhere in Chinese and English, giving notice that the district in which I had spent the whole day was plague-infested. I made light of it to him, but felt in no pleasant mood when my chair was set down in front of the Victoria Hotel. But to make sure the information was right I asked the hotel manager whether he had heard anything.

He assured me that the warning was quite true, and warned me earnestly against going there.

Said I indignantly, "You don't think I am going to be such a fool after what you've just told me?" Then I bid the boy carry up the seven or eight big parcels of jade to my room and get ready my bath as hot as possible—likewise to bring me several bottles of methylated spirit. He told me that the bath was ready, but that methylated spirit could not be had as the chemist was already closed.

"Then bring me six bottles of whisky," I said, "and be quick."

I don't know what the manager thought of such an order, but he sent it up. I poured all the whisky into the bath, threw in all the jade I had bought and then got into the precious brew myself, staying there till I and jade, and the pads they were on, were parboiled. The fumes were most exhilarating, and I had to have two boys lift me out of the bath and fish for the jade with ladles.

The following day my shipment of jade went off to Paris according to programme and free of plague germs. I knew the germs must all have been dead, because those that were not boiled alive were poisoned by the vilest cheap whisky, Japanese-made.

As soon as I had made my shipment I went to bed again

for several hours to sleep off the fumes which still hung about me, and then having made sure that the boy had burnt all the clothes I had worn the day before, I had a second purification in almost boiling water and went out for a private treat to a restaurant famed throughout China. I enjoyed every course with double zest—shark's fins, pickled frogs, birds-nest soup with duck crackling and eggs as black as ebony, thirty years old. If I know anything about good cooking, then first-class Canton chow is not easily beaten. I never wanted to know the names of the dishes I had eaten nor how they had been prepared, but was quite satisfied with the verdict of my palate.

À propos of gastronomics, on my way home one day I saw on the Bund an itinerant vendor of dainties get into a heated argument with one of his customers, a very humble Chinaman, but not of the coolie class. As in every large city an idle crowd soon gathered round the two men, and I myself, as inquisitive as anyone, also stopped to watch developments. There were high words on both sides, the customer called the purveyor of dainties a crook and he returned the compliment with interest. But that did not settle the dispute. The crowd assumed the rôles of jury and judge. And this was the case before them.

The man behind the little table was a vendor of roast cockroaches, the other a customer who had bought for a cash, one-fortieth of a penny, a tit-bit daintily transfixed on a wooden skewer. The latter claimed that when he bit into his purchase he discovered that the cockroach was rather high game and that he couldn't stomach it. He therefore claimed the refund of his money. The vendor, however, claimed that the cockroach was perfectly fresh and fried in the best peanut oil; and to prove that it was fresh he lifted the wing case and invited everyone in the

circle, including myself, to have a free sniff. Most of the bystanders availed themselves readily of the treat, not including myself. With great judicial firmness, the majority maintained that the cockroach was not in so high a state of putrefaction as to warrant the complaint. A ragged, bare-footed coolie, very dirty, very tired-looking, then assumed the post of judge. He addressed the gourmand thus :

"You had taken a pretty good bite before you complained. Therefore you must pay something for what you have eaten."

"Hail to you, future Lord Chancellor of China," murmured I to myself as I backed away from the crowd without staying to inquire whether there was a smaller coin in circulation than a cash. If there was not, how could the fellow manage to abide by the verdict of the judge? To me it had looked as though the cockroach specialist was getting ready to give his carping client a good kick in the pants—hence, possibly, my hasty departure. But I came away with a profound respect for the chair-coolies of Canton. No human being anywhere can submit to harder work for a bowl of rice than he and yet preserve his manhood and a kind of sturdy independence. I have found the coolie possessed of a great sense of humour too, to my cost on one occasion as you shall hear.

One day in pouring rain I stepped out of the hotel and was immediately surrounded by a mob of chair-coolies all clamouring for my patronage. As I had considerable experience of their ilk by now, I insisted on making my bargain before setting out. In ordinary dry weather the fare was the equivalent of sixpence ; now one and all asked two dollars Canton money. As I had a good mackintosh and umbrella I turned them off and pretended to set out on foot. Then one chap who had kept to the outside of the

circle of chairs surrounding me yelled at the top of his voice that he and his mate would take me the distance stated for the ordinary fare. I got into the chair, they lifted it on to their shoulders and with swinging strides set out towards the gold and silversmiths' quarter.

Presently we passed through a narrow street in which the water stood ankle deep. Not a soul was abroad. Even the sewer rats had sought shelter from the torrent of rain which was coming down with ever greater force. My coolies walked on unconcernedly through the puddles of water and mud which grew deeper every minute and now nearly reached their knees. In the centre of one of those long, narrow and evil-smelling streets they set down the chair and told me they could not go any further, as the water was getting too deep. However, since they had not fulfilled their contract, I could get out and pay them nothing for having brought me thus far. I bid them take me back to the hotel and offered to pay them double the fare agreed upon. No, they said, that they couldn't do. There must be a new contract, and their terms were three dollars for taking me back and nothing for having brought me along thus far.

By this time the rain had eased up, and the shop-people on either side of the street came to their doors to enjoy the spectacle of a foreign devil about to be evicted from the fastness of a sedan chair and made to wade in his polished boots and white clothes through the knee-deep puddles. I don't quite know whether I was more angry than amused. At any rate I realised that these two coolies had me beat and I was at their mercy. I dug into my pocket and handed them three Canton silver dollars. The chair was again lifted upon their shoulders. A half-turn and some hundred paces saw us clear of any puddles whatsoever and in front

of the house to which I had asked them to bring me. The men shook with laughter as they set me down. I could not help joining in their laughter and dismissed them with a handful of cigarettes.

After spending some thirty minutes in the shop I came out again and there were my two chair-coolies waiting. I hesitated for a moment, but as there was no other chair about I got into theirs again. They took me back to my hotel, and I got out and started to pay them the fare. But now, much as a dollar meant to them, they were going to show the foreign devil that they could be sports too, and they refused to accept my money.

I never made the trip from Hong-Kong to Canton by steamer without misgivings. I was fully aware that at any time I might get the kind of experience one does not crave for if one's pockets are bulging with diamonds. I refer to a surprise attack by pirates. Not, indeed, an attack on the high seas by a pirate ship flying the black flag, but an attack by desperadoes concealed amongst the Chinese steerage passengers with arms and ammunition hidden in crates, baskets and bundles of old clothes or sleeping mats. Great was the precaution taken by the shipping companies; the steerage passengers were confined behind iron grilles and two Sikhs with loaded rifles stood guard in front of the shut and padlocked gates. But in spite of this, and the special vigilance of the officers on board, every now and then the pirates managed, no doubt with the aid of someone amongst the Chinese crew, to unfasten the gates, shoot down the guards and overpower the officers. On at least two occasions I just missed such an experience by a day, and on each of those occasions the captured steamer was taken to Bias Bay, in Chinese waters. Everything of value that could conveniently be transferred to praus, sampans

and flat-bottomed boats, was taken. These small vessels had come out to meet the pirates in the dead of night. While this work of transshipment was going on the passengers were also being stripped of their valuables, even down to the clothes they wore. When all was taken and the pirates had removed such firearms as they had been able to discover, they too went ashore, and left the unfortunates they had plundered to find their way back to the home-port.

The leader of the Bias Bay pirates, or rather the organiser of these piratical expeditions, was a woman. I had been told so frequently by one who knew more about the nefarious doings of the criminal classes in the colony than even the head of the Secret Service. One day when I was in his company I saw her in a Chinese jewellery store in Queen Street, but when my friend told me who and what she was I thought he was pulling my leg. Later on, however, he gave me proof of his assertion.

Not only the steamers on the Hong-Kong—Canton run, but also those on the Hong-Kong—Macao route and those plying regularly between Hong-Kong and Shanghai were subject to these diabolical visitations. A very good friend of mine in Hong-Kong, the colony's greatest curio expert and dealer, had a weakness, well known to all his acquaintances, for the fan-tan tables at Macao. Every Sunday in the year he would spend there. He never won nor expected to win, but to Macao he would go, leaving his money with the gaming-house keeper, return quite perkily, and call himself worse names than his best friends could possibly have bestowed on him. Once on his return trip from the Portuguese possession, after the gaming-house keeper had cleared him out, the pirates broke loose. I read about it in the Monday morning paper, and as his name was men-

tioned as one of the passengers on board, I went to see him at once.

He treated it all as a good joke, but when I pressed him he told me that he had felt none too happy as he stood in line with the other passengers, and the bandit with loaded pistol in one hand emptied his pockets with the other; and worse when a big basket was brought round by two other villains into which everybody had to drop as much of their clothing as the men with the baskets thought fit. As for hats, they had to be given up without parley. Now my friend stood in his stockinged feet minus coat and vest and bare-headed, but none too chagrined, because he could see the funny side of the thing. Presently one of those chaps came past again with his basket to garner any stray vestment. My friend collared him, pointed to his own big bald head and pretended he had the shivers. The pirate, as villainous-looking a chap, my friend told me, as you could well imagine, looked him up and down critically, went away and brought back a basket full of the confiscated hats, and bade him be sharp and take his pick. The first one he tried on came down over his ears; the second balanced on the crown of his head. Then the pirate took one after the other and tried as hard as a hatter to fit him until one of the leaders of the gang came along and kicked him in the pants for wasting valuable time. The last hat of all was the gold-braided chief officer's cap—and this being bestowed upon him, my friend had to be content with it, or nothing.

Another time, and only a few months later, a steamer on the Hong-Kong—Shanghai run met with the same fate. Amongst the passengers was the wife of Doctor Sun Yat Sen's Foreign Secretary, the daughter-in-law of one of China's most revered elder statesmen. She happened to be in her cabin when the fun started, and she immediately

realised what was going on on deck. Forthwith she locked her cabin door, gathered all her jewellery and sewed it into the bolster on her bunk. Scarcely had she finished the job when heavy knocks at the door and a gruff voice outside made her open at once. She knew that resistance was of no avail. A couple of the pirates entered, searched her baggage thoroughly for money and jewellery ; they took her small change, of course, and also the diamond and pearl earrings from her ears, which she had forgotten to sew into the bolster with the rest.

But somehow or other, while the steamer was proceeding under orders from the pirate chief, the gang learnt that the wife of the Foreign Secretary of the South China Republic was one of the passengers they had robbed. Immediately they sent a deputation to wait on the lady in her cabin with instructions to apologise for the inconvenience caused, and with an offer for her to come into the saloon where she would be allowed to pick her own from the jewellery that had been taken from the passengers. Accordingly she went along, but admitted that she could not identify her own. She was probably too upset. At any rate the pirates took a couple of handfuls of jewellery and handed them to her. These she subsequently turned over to a medical mission.

This gallant treatment by the pirates may well have been due to the fact that the leader revered the memory of the great Doctor Wu Ting Fang, her late father-in-law ; or he may have realised that the South China Government might make things very uncomfortable for him and his band if it acted in concert with the Hong-Kong Government, whose hands were terribly tied because a rounding up of the pirates at Bias Bay would have involved an incursion by the British Navy into Chinese territorial waters.

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I too went to Macao, but on business. I intended to visit the fan-tan houses, but to my great regret I never had time. It was an experience missed. From a business point of view also my first and second trips were failures. The Chinese there were not very prosperous; the Portuguese officials had very little money either, and eked out their poor stipends by such graft as came their way. But here I came across as fine a Britisher as one may come across in any part of the world, and also made the acquaintance of his wife, a Spanish lady. A journey made is never wasted if it gives one a friend.

I met, on a later visit, the man into whose coffers flowed most of the profits from the gaming-houses, besides the receipts brought in by the opium monopoly for the colony. We became friends, quarrelled because he was obstinately unreasonable, became reconciled because he knew he had been unfair to me, and was on the point of partnering me in a big scheme of a unique kind—of which later—when a Chinese bullet put “paid” to his account.

CHAPTER XXX

THE GREAT CASINO BUBBLE

FOR one year, eight months and some indefinite number of days, I had nothing but inward praise and more tangible gratitude for my room and table-boy, Tang Tai Ling.

Tang Tai Ling had so far displayed scrupulous honesty, for he never so much as nibbled at my sweetmeats, sampled my cigars or cigarettes, or allowed his fingers to stray towards my small change.

But one day I began to wonder whether a twisted nose in an ashen pock-marked, though curiously ascetic, face, was not meant as a danger signal for the unwary. I began to suspect from various trifling signs that he was well on the way to become intimately acquainted with the inside of the safe in my bedroom ; and from then onward I systematically changed the combination lock once a month in the stillness of night. But for all that he bore me no grudge, I felt sure. On the contrary, I suspected that I had greatly risen in his esteem.

In the absence of definite proof of his intentions I censured myself, however, for allowing the shadow of my suspicion to fall upon him ; and I was rather glad than otherwise when events proved that I had not in thought been unjust to him, and extreme danger forced him to lift the mask which hid—I hate to say it—a thief.

It happened like this.

The rooms next to mine were occupied by an American newly arrived in the colony, a self-styled doctor of medicine and, as it turned out, a thoroughgoing quack. The fellow

was a heavy drinker, and one night when he had taken on a rather heavy mixed cargo of liquor he forgot to lock his bedroom door before tumbling into bed, boots and all. In the morning, consequently, there was a great commotion; his wallet, containing a big wad of money, had vanished.

The hotel management should then with propriety have remembered that for the last fifteen years, at intervals of from nine months to a year, successive occupants of that room and of the adjoining apartments, which were under Tang Tai Ling's especial care, had been laid under contribution. But jealous of the reputation of the house, they maintained that since the whole of their staff, from book-keeper to kitchen scullion, had been in their employ for a decade and a half, the doctor must have lost his wallet outside.

The American, however, was sure he knew better. He insisted upon going into the matter. And so, after a few days of strenuous effort he prevailed upon a reluctant Public Security Department to despatch its minions to the hotel.

I was not on the spot when they arrived, but I heard them come. The European and Chinese detectives presented themselves with the noise and clatter of a cavalry detachment. From the porch of my ground-floor window I listened to the hubbub, and knew that down there in the basement the whole of the staff were being ordered by the management to line up in the yard to be questioned; and that then their quarters would be searched if the police should think it necessary.

In a moment, however, my door opened and Tang Tai Ling, who should have been downstairs with the others, slid into the room with a jug and glasses in his hands.

Outwardly calm he was as pale as death, and his agitation was betrayed by his nervously twitching fingers as he set the tray upon the table.

From the corner of my eye I saw him go to my wardrobe, open it, draw from under his belt a small bundle and toss it amongst my linen. Not a word did he say to me. I asked no questions. I did not care to investigate, or to find out anything that might compel me to act the informer. There was nothing to be said, and he crept out as silently as he had come in.

When half an hour later he re-entered my room, Tang Tai Ling was as self-possessed as ever, and with the utmost brazenness busied himself with my socks, which he declared needed overhauling. He took away a goodly bundle of them for the house-amah to see to and with them, I felt, went the American's bank roll.

If Tang Tai Ling had been obsequious before, he was henceforth a father to me, and I read that in his eyes which reproved me for still continuing to change the safe combination at regular intervals. Dared he have spoken he would have said, "No need for that now, master. Give me a chance to prove that I am grateful to you for saving my face."

As for the American quack doctor, he fled the colony within a month or so of these events. The cause of his flight was an illegal operation which claimed the life of a young woman, so my sympathy stayed with the get-rich-quick Chinaman.

Tang Tai Ling had made good use of his years of service in Hong-Kong, for in Macao, the Portuguese colony on the China coast near by, he owned a great deal of house property and some shops which members of his family ran for him. He was a good husband, I was told, to three

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wives, a devoted father to a numerous progeny and a doting grandsire to two sturdy Portuguese half-castes.

In a manner it was to him that I was indebted for some pleasant day-dreams, for he was the first cause of what I might well call "The Great Casino Bubble." He brought me advance information of the intended sale by the Macao Government of the ancient block of buildings known as "Boa Vista" with a magnificent site, overlooking the sea, belonging to it. The property had in the course of years been let to many tenants and had latterly been used as an hotel. But the last tenants, at any rate, had found it difficult to make a living and pay the rent which the Government demanded. Twentieth century hotel guests cannot be comforted with fourteenth century cheer.

And now "Boa Vista" and its grounds were for sale once more. Already invaded by the germ of a great idea, I made careful inquiries about the place. I became convinced that if one were to make extensive alterations the buildings could be turned into a modern attractive hotel, of which the Portuguese Colony stood in great need. I pondered over the idea for a long time, and the longer I thought the greater became my ambition. It occurred to me that a casino and hotel combined might prove a still more profitable proposition—if one could work it.

Once the idea of an up-to-date casino had taken hold of me I began to elaborate on the original scheme, till within a few days of its first conception I could already see in my mind's eye the Monte Carlo of the Far East, with myself in the rôle of M. Blanc. All the conditions likely to make for success appeared to be present: the position of the place was analogous, topographically, to that of Monte Carlo, the climate salubrious, the vegetation luxuriant, the scenery beautiful. There was a romantic bit of history attached to

the place, sufficient of Old Portugal left to attract tourists. But in addition to all these advantages, the nearness to two of the wealthiest Chinese provinces—Kwangsi and Kwantung—and Macao's equidistance from Hong-Kong and Canton promised to make it the Mecca of all gamblers in that part of the world, as well as a haven for those merely desiring rest and a change of scene.

I was privately informed that the Macao Government was only too anxious to stop the opium traffic altogether, if some other equally productive means of revenue could be found. Everything seemed propitious. I studied the matter from all angles, and could find no snag in it. Here was a grand opportunity for organising something really big. I amused myself by working out the whole thing in all its aspects, down to the minutest detail. And almost unawares I soon found myself in a position to broach the subject to the authorities in Macao.

I knew by this time a sufficiently large number of wealthy Chinese in Hong-Kong, Canton and in North China who, I was sure, would give the proposition their financial backing, and had sufficient faith and confidence in me to leave the organising in my hands. I spoke to an engineer and architect friend of mine, and described to him what I had in mind, and then sent him to survey the estate and existing buildings. He reported favourably upon the site, and produced some remarkably fine drawings of elevations and plans. These—particularly the coloured elevations—were now something to impress my Chinese backers, I thought, as well as the municipal councillors of Macao who would have the last word.

There were to be an amusement pier, pleasure boats and a ferry service to the neighbouring coast, a hydro with gymnasium, thermal baths and swimming pools, a casino

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containing rooms for chemin de fer, roulette, fan-tan, and petits chevaux, billiard tables and dance halls. The hotel was to have 250 bedrooms, each with its own bathroom, American fashion, and was to be constructed so that one could build on twice that number of rooms without interfering with the symmetry of the structure. Yes—I had my dreams !

A special feature was to be the outer gallery encircling the spoke-like wings of the main building, where as many small shops were to be installed as there were trades in the city, and where no two traders in the same commodity were to be allowed space. Ample provision for garages and repair shops were also included in the plans.

The scheme, financially, provided that in return for the concession the Government of Macao was to receive from the casino company a percentage of its net profits for thirty years, part of which was to go to the municipality of Macao to be utilised for the improvement of roads and lighting, and the clearing of slum areas ; while the policing of the casino area was to be undertaken by the company, and all minor officials and labour were to be recruited from the local population. At the end of thirty years the whole of the estate and buildings were to become the exclusive property of the Government.

Three million dollars was my estimate for the cost of this undertaking, and the authorised capital of the company I intended to be five million, of which my Chinese financiers were willing to find between them one and a half millions and give an assurance that they could raise as much again from their own circle of friends.

There was thus no need for me to worry about the money side of the scheme. Therefore, as soon as possible, I arranged for an interview with His Excellency, the Governor

of Macao, to whom I submitted my proposals. Although he was pleased with it, so he gave me to understand, he remained diplomatically non-committal. But a week later our negotiations with the municipality started, to whom His Excellency had referred the matter with his recommendation that they were to consider it favourably.

Now the fun started. In those early hectic days, when I was still under the hot spell of my vision, many Portuguese officials began to discover that a visit to Hong-Kong on business connected with the "great scheme" assured free entertainment over long week-ends for themselves and their ladies. Details had to be discussed, of course, and they argued, no doubt, that they might as well be discussed in comfort at the Hong-Kong Hotel as in stuffy Government offices at Macao.

One is prepared for that sort of thing in the Far East. I had more or less expected something of the kind. Moreover, you can't entertain too lavishly folk who appreciate your genius and tell you to your face how they admire you, and how ready they are to promote your interests. I was not surprised when some of my Portuguese well-wishers informed me that they found it difficult to co-operate with me officially while little private worries were pressing so heavily upon them. Courteously they hinted that since they had honoured me with their confidence I could surely do no less than relieve them of their most pressing burdens of debt, so that they might the better be able to devote their undivided attention to the furthering of my business. After all, is the want of a few hundred dollars to be allowed to interfere with your co-worker's peace of mind?

It soon leaked out in the Portuguese Colony that I was not only a man of extraordinary enterprise, but also as different as chalk from cheese from those stuck-up inac-

cessible Britishers in Hong-Kong—in fact, that I was *very simpatico* and *so* generous. How I wished they hadn't spread such lies ! More and more officials came to see me, and their wives and daughters who came with them, of course, were so very charming ! They had heard, these ladies, that I dabbled in diamonds too, "just for fun"—they said—and would I mind very much if they asked me to value for them their own diamond jewellery ? Of course, they knew they weren't *really* first-class stones, but then father was only a Government official, and Portugal but a poor country. Still, they adored diamonds, and some day—who knows ?—if it wasn't too much to hope when the Senhor's dream of Monte Carlo in Macao had become a reality and he was rolling in millions, he might perchance remember his humble friends, the wives and daughters of the Portuguese officials, who had made it possible for his dream to come true. In the meantime, if he had some teeny-weeny little stones that no one wanted——?

Would it delight you to have me confess that I ever believed that pretty speeches, pretty ears and pretty stones are perfectly suited to each other ? Would you have me say more, so that you might with justice bestow upon me the honourable letters M.U.G. ?

So everything went swimmingly, and as fast as official business can be transacted anywhere. Of course there were vexatious delays, vexatious only, I was told, because I, a mere impulsive merchant, did not realise that Government business—at least Portuguese Government business—was not transacted on common mercantile lines. The explanation satisfied me for a while. I was still green.

I cannot recall a single instance of downright graft in connection with that grandly-conceived scheme. No one ever came up to me and said, "Unless you pay me so many

thousand dollars I am going to oppose you in Council !” No one ever threatened to frustrate my plans unless I handed over so much of my prospective profits—in advance. My gifts were freely bestowed to cement friendships of which I stood in need, and they were bestowed without compulsion. It was only when my well-wishers increased out of all proportion even to the grandeur of my scheme, that I first began to fear for its ultimate success.

My company had not yet been formed. It still existed partly in my imagination and partly on paper, backed by promises contingent upon my being able to secure the approval of the Macao municipality and, of course, the subsequent sanction of the authorities in Lisbon. Hence there were no funds available for “preliminaries” save those which came from my own pocket. Was it to be wondered at, therefore, that after six months of entertaining and free-will offerings I felt put out when one of the brightest City Lights of Macao—a pompous municipal dignitary—reminded me of a Portuguese proverb to the effect that he who rides on a well-greased axle rides in comfort ?

I judged that the axle had been, if anything, smothered in grease, and yet I was not riding in comfort. And I told him as much, quite bluntly. Upon mature reflection he thereupon decided that the best interests of the colony would not be served by his sponsoring of my scheme : rank treason to my great cause and to me, his dear “amigo.” Such faithlessness should not go unpunished, and he would have deserved that I record his name here and now ; if I refrain it is only because of sweet Carmencita, his daughter.

Other councillors followed the traitor’s lead—some on the principle that all new things should be banned, and

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others just because the Governor of the colony himself was greatly in favour of my proposals. Opposition grew like a snowball, almost overnight. My friends, their wives and daughters, came to see me no more.

Meanwhile in Hong-Kong my scheme was also meeting with great opposition from those in the British Colony who thought that if roulette in luxurious surroundings were substituted for fan-tan in squalid, stuffy, unwholesome rooms, the British youth of Hong-Kong would surely go to the dogs. The British authorities, therefore, were also dead against me and did their best to break the scheme.

But above all, I had one most powerful and hitherto unsuspected opponent who had been against me from the start. This was the man behind the opium monopoly in Macao. I had said in my prospectus that there would be no further need for the ugly opium traffic in the Portuguese possession as a source of revenue if my scheme were accepted. Naturally, he was not going to lie down under this and see his source of income taken away from beneath his very nose. I like a fool had completely left him out of my calculations, and now, using his enormous influence and dipping freely into his long purse, he countered me at every step. He was the decisive factor behind my failure—for failure I could now see it was. While the documents were still preparing in Macao and a first report was already on its way to the Portuguese capital, I had already decided to abandon my plans. The dice were too heavily loaded against what would have been at any time a hazardous project.

And so after coming thus far my scheme was dropped, and with it all my glittering dreams of another and even more exotic Monte Carlo. It was only then that I actually

met Li, the opium monopolist who had so contributed to wreck my plans. The jeweller in Hong-Kong with whom he dealt had not been able to supply eight matched diamonds of hazel-nut size and he had been told that he might find them with me. I did not disappoint him, and from then on Li became a regular visitor at my office once a week or so.

He was a strange volcanic type. The manner of his buying was always like this: he would come through the door like a whirlwind, refuse to be seated since he really should not have come as he was so terribly busy. He would then say, "Anything good in diamonds—not too dear?"

When I had spread before him what I thought might tempt him, he would turn the stones over with a toothpick and say, "How much?" To whatever price I mentioned he would say, "Too dear!" walk to the door, there make a half-turn and add, "No less?" come back to the table, pick up the stones, wrap them in any piece of paper that was handy and, with a "Send me the account," disappear. Next time he would bring the cheque to cover the amount of his last purchase, and buy again "on tick." These purchases ran into twenty, thirty and forty thousand dollars a time, and I could not imagine what he did with all the diamonds he bought. Well—I found out at last. He gave them all away. Many of the Hong-Kong, Canton and Macao officials' wives sported gorgeous diamond earrings and diamond rings. No wonder my friend Li could pull off deals that few other men could handle!

He tumbled one day to the fact that his purveyor of diamonds was the same man who had spoken so disparagingly of the opium traffic on which he himself was battering. He came and gave me a lecture, saying at the

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same time that if I had enlisted his co-operation he would have come in on the scheme. With his aid, I am sure all difficulties would have vanished. But it was too late. The opportune moment had gone ; and it rests still with some future speculator to make my dream reality.

CHAPTER XXXI

JAPAN

ON my return to Hong-Kong I found business conditions there were gradually but visibly becoming worse. Although the recent general strike and the incidental killing and maiming by British soldiers of a few Chinese was supposed to have been forgotten, the Cantonese discriminated against British goods and shipping to such an extent that many firms were ruined. There was such a rapid falling-off in my own turnover that I decided to visit all the treaty ports in quest of trade.

At the end of the trip north I found myself again in Shanghai, but my old Chinese friend, the one who had shown me such kindness because I had been civil to his son, had lost the greater part of his fortune. Yet although he was on the wrong side of sixty, he spoke to me quite confidently of re-building it. The Chinaman is not easily downed—any more than is a Son of the Captivity !

For the first time I visited the pearl market in that city, but purchased nothing. Being still interested in jade, I came to see some exquisite strings of beads, also cups and figurines carved out of that material. I had never known that such perfect things of their kind existed. Unfortunately their owners knew their value as well as I did.

Though more than a year had passed since the great earthquake which wrought such havoc in Tokyo and Yokohama, the evidences of the great disaster were still to be seen on every side. In Yokohama, the fine hotel where I used to stay when I first visited Japan was now a rubbish

heap under which, some said, there were still buried a number of the victims ; tramlines were for miles twisted and coiled like huge snakes ; and while some thoroughfares were assuming something like their former aspect, the greater number were impassable after sunset because of the many water-filled pits and the mounds thrown up by the earth's violent tremors and convulsions. The best they could do for a European traveller was to give him a small tent and feed him in a rough-and-ready way in a hastily-constructed bungalow of flimsy weatherboard.

They gave this place, a haphazard collection of shacks and tents, the name of the Tent Hotel. It came into being thus : when the disaster occurred, several Europeans, mostly young men, made heroic efforts to save those who were buried under the ruins ; they cared for the wounded and maimed and consoled the stricken, although they themselves had in each case lost someone dear to them as well as all their belongings. When the American Red Cross had done all it could do and the time came for it to leave, it made a gift of its tents and most of the paraphernalia therein to these young Europeans. They started the Tent Hotel, and when I came to be a guest there, I sat in the seat which H.R.H. the Prince of Wales had occupied at a banquet some weeks before during his tour of the Far East.

One of the proprietors told me what he had seen of the first quake. A big Canadian Pacific liner was on the point of leaving Yokohama, had actually got some distance away from her berth ; and my informant, together with a large crowd of people, was standing waving to departing friends, when suddenly the earth began to heave most violently. As he gazed along the water-front, the sea-wall curled like a great reptile and crumbled landwards, the earth rising in great billows of dust. He realised instantly

what had occurred, and his first thought was for his wife, whom he had left only half an hour before. He rushed back through the already transfigured city, being guided mainly by such landmarks as still remained standing. He reached his own house. The front of it had fallen in, and there, under a huge beam and a mound of fallen masonry, lay his wife, half in and half out of the *débris*. He made frantic efforts to save her, for she was still living and recognised him, but it was all in vain, and she died in his arms.

In Kioto—in the ancient city aforesaid called Miako, the “Residence,” because the Mikados chose to hold their courts there—I had a most peculiar experience.

At the time of my last visit to the town, during this particular trip of mine through Japan, three brothers kept a quaint little curio shop in an unpaved lane just off the main road. I discovered the shop for myself on one of my random strolls in quest of the interesting and uncommon. And what really induced me, on that fateful, cold November afternoon, to enter the place was a highly glazed three-handled china jug, the shade of green malachite. Its shape and design seemed unique to me, for I had not seen the like in all my travels. It occupied the centre, as it were the place of honour, in a window which was ludicrously crammed with small bronzes, ivories and lacquered oddments.

When I entered the shop the three proprietors remained seated on cushions upon the raised platform behind the 4-foot railing which separated it from the shop proper. They were undersized, misshapen old men with hard wizened faces, whose combined ages I guessed to be 210.

They took no notice whatsoever of my entrance, but seemed entirely absorbed in warming their chilled and

shaking hands over a niggardly fire of glowing charcoal in a bowl-brazier which was small enough to have formed part of the furnishings of a Japanese doll's house. I stood for a few moments undecided whether to stay or beat a hasty retreat, for the three blear-eyed decrepit mannikins cared evidently not a fig for customers, and were more like three weird dwarfs from some fairy-tale than shop-keepers.

However, they presented such a woeful picture of decrepitude that I really now felt that they were entitled to an apology from me for having entered their shop, bringing with me the sharp edge of the wintry blast. But out of only three Japanese words—the whole of my vocabulary—I could frame no adequate apology, and so I just stayed standing there, hoping that sooner or later someone would deign to take notice of me.

The curio-laden tiers of shelves lining the whole of one wall occupied my eyes for quite some time, but they contained only the sort of things which appeal to the general run of foreign tourists. I turned to the small tables which took up most of the floor space. Here the wares were not of the spurious type of antiques. They bore, as far as I could judge, the imprint of great age and much usage; and quite clearly they had been broidered, carven, graven, lacquered or spun by cunning fingers long since crumbled into dust.

Presently one of the little men rose slowly from his cushion and came towards me with hands buried in the voluminous sleeves of his drab and frayed kimono. He addressed me in tolerable English of the Nipponese variety :

"You see any kind you like?" he asked in an unpleasant, high-pitched voice, as with a sweep of his right kimono sleeve he pointed towards the cumbered shelves.

"I like every kind I see there," I answered, "but nothing I care to buy."

"I know," he said with direct abruptness, "you come to buy the jug in the window—so?"

"I saw and admired," I admitted, "but I haven't the money to buy everything I like."

"Sorry for you," he said with indrawn breath of politeness, and added with a self-satisfied grin which made me wince, "You could not buy even if you wanted. We do not sell, no, not at any price, not the jug."

He turned for confirmation to his partners, who were sitting as still as the bronze Buddhas on their shelves. Now with one accord they both shook their heads to bear him out, and then relapsed once more into their frozen torpor.

"Ah!" said I, my casual interest in the jug now being fanned into the desire to own it, "I've seen no curio dealer yet who would not sell at a price. This jug has a history, then? Is it old? Very old?"

"Ver' old," repeated the dealer gravely. "When my gran'father-gran'father-gran'father was a small boy this jug was more than one thousand year old."

"Well," I said, "it looks every bit as ancient as you say. What period does it belong to? Can you tell me something about it?"

"Talk?" he replied, "I can make much talk of it, but you cannot stop here one month to hear me! Half of Japan history belong to this jug—so?"

"I see," I said; "now I can understand why you won't sell. But maybe I could have a good look at it? Would you mind?"

"You can see in the window," he said gruffly; "we cannot bring it out for any man. Maybe something happen to it, maybe bad luck, maybe we three brothers die."

"No, no," I said, "nothing can happen, nothing will happen. Will you not let me see it properly?" I pleaded.

Again he turned to his partners. But they only shook their heads in denial. Then he spoke to them in Japanese. Instead of an articulate reply, they shrugged their shoulders, conveying the impression that they for their part declined to assume any responsibility for what might happen. Whether out of courtesy to a foreigner or because of a desire to show off—or for some other reason—he now threw open the window and almost reverently brought out the jug and placed it with extreme care in the centre of a small table so that I might view it from every angle.

As I have said, the shop was absurdly crowded with small tables, and there was not much space in which to move about freely. Still I was quite sure that what happened next was not due to any carelessness of mine.

As I was stooping to enable me to copy into my notebook for future reference the cryptic symbols on the base of the jug, the table tilted, the jug slid down its inclined surface, and before I could save it it rolled over the edge and crashed to the floor.

I dared scarcely look. When I did I saw what a moment before had been a feast to any but the most indifferent eyes—scattered on the floor; a score or so of jagged fragments large and small fit only for the dustbin.

Instantly and as though hoisted by a crane, the two somnolent old fellows on the other side of the rail rose from their cushions with every sign of distress on their distorted features. I stood numb and speechless. I had played the bull in the china-shop. How could I right the wrong I had done? What had been the value of this thing? What would it cost me? Would I, as a stranger in this city, friendless and alone, have much bother with the authorities? These were some of the thoughts uppermost in my mind.

However, as soon as the first shock of the crash had dissolved, I began fervently to apologise. I expressed my deep sorrow for the mishap—but what are words? They alone could not compensate the old fellows. So I brought out my pocket-book and shamefacedly laid five 100-yen notes on the edge of the same table, which by now had been set up again.

When the old men saw me put down the money they moaned and tore at their hair. The pocket-book was still in my hands. I added another five 100-yen notes to the others, turned on my heel, rushed out through the door and was heartily glad when I found myself again one of a large crowd on the main road.

Some two weeks later I was in Osaka, the largest manufacturing town in Japan. At the hotel I made the acquaintance of an American who was the buying agent in the Far East for a Middle-West firm of world-wide repute.

We spent several evenings together. He was delightful company. Of course we talked shop most of the time, but he was a reading man too, like myself, so we also discussed books. And when I found him also to be a collector of rare china I told him of my Kyoto experience. He listened with great interest until I had come to the end of my story. Then he took a long pull out of his glass, snipped the end off a large cigar with great deliberation, lit it thoughtfully, stuck it into the corner of his mouth, and said, after his first few puffs, "You poor, poor simp!"

"What do you mean?" I said indignantly. "Surely I couldn't do less than pay for my clumsiness?"

"Wal, perhaps I shouldn't have called you that. If it's any satisfaction to you I can tell you that I got stung by those crooks in just the same way!"

I gaped at him.

"Must be quite five years ago now. I also parted with a good-sized wad of United States dollars to them. Every time I think of it I could kick myself. However, since then I've met quite a few fellows who've been stung by these birds of prey, both English and American. I got kinder intrigued, you bet! So I had to find out all about these respectable shopkeepers. Say, what do you think?"

But I was still speechless.

"They were actors. And they had certainly learnt to make up, believe me. Would you credit it that not one of them can be more than forty—and five years ago they looked close on eighty! I found out more. The table which they use is a stage prop. It's so placed that when any of the partners who remain seated pulls a hidden lever, the part of the floor upon which two of the table-legs stand gives way—an arrangement of springs. Of course the table tilts beautifully, and anything that happens to be on it must fall off. Simple, eh? But how neat!

"The jug? Priceless? Why, yes, the original genuine jugs of that kind are worth a mint o' money, but there are only three of 'em in existence. One is in the Imperial Museum at Tokyo, another's in the private collection of the Emperor of Japan, and the third used to be in the Summer Palace at Peking before the German Emperor sent his friend Waldersee to China for some curios. But the jug you paid for wasn't one, and the jug I paid for wasn't one, and the jug each of the other china-smashers paid for wasn't one! What you and I and all the others got landed with were good but cheap imitations made in Canton, South China."

"Look here," I said with some heat, "it makes a good story, but I don't think it's right to take away people's characters, even by way of a joke."

TRADE WINDS

"Peeved, my boy?" he grinned. "Wal, I guessed I'd touch a raw spot all right, all right. It hurts your vanity, doesn't it? But let me finish. These jugs I've said are being made in Canton, and you can buy 'em for seven dollars and a half Mex. apiece, retail; and for forty-two dollars Mex. per dozen wholesale, less five per cent. for cash with order—packed—boxed—delivered free to rail or steamer."

"Is that really so?" I asked earnestly.

"Wal," he answered, "some people are difficult to convince. However, when you get back to Hong-Kong look me up at the hotel. We'll spend a week-end at Canton together and you shall see where they make your thousand-year-old jugs. . . ."

CHAPTER XXXII

CORPSE PEARLS

AGAIN I returned to Hong-Kong. Conditions there were as bad as ever. I felt that the time had come for me to move, and I selected Singapore as my next centre of activity.

I instructed my chief-of-staff to pull up stakes at Hong-Kong as soon as I should cable him from Singapore that I had succeeded in getting an office. In due course he arrived, and my first question concerned the safe, which I could not see amongst his belongings. "Oh," he said, "I had it carefully crated and marked, and instructed the American Express Company to forward it by this steamer. No doubt it is in the hold——"

"Of course you cleared the safe of all valuables?" I said.

"Why should I do that, since they would be safer in the chest than amongst my baggage."

"Well," I said, rather put out, "I don't like it."

My forebodings were justified. Weeks elapsed, the safe did not come and the American Express Company telegraphed up and down, sent tracers to every port in search of it. But my one and a half ton safe, which the first and second officers of the steamer distinctly remembered being lowered into the hold of the vessel, had vanished, apparently from the surface of the earth. The contents, my rare collection of jade, were irretrievably lost and were not insured. Only for the iron box did I draw compensation. And when I signed the receipt for the money I said to the

official, " Surely it is impossible for a huge safe to disappear like that ? "

He replied, " My dear sir, don't use the word ' impossible ' where Chinese are concerned. We've lost a railway bridge between Hong-Kong and Shanghai before now ! " That satisfied me.

In the building in which I had my office, a European firm of jewellers had their retail store. One Monday morning bright and early, when I had scarcely had time to hang up my hat, the principal of the firm came in with a Chinaman who was open to buy a small lot of diamonds. The European jeweller then left, saying he had to attend to his shop, and gave me to understand that he'd expect a small commission on any sale I might make to this customer.

I displayed my goods ; the Chinaman seemed very critical and offered such poor prices that I could not accept. He apologised for having taken up my time and departed. As soon as he was gone I had a hunch that all was not well. It was our practice to clean up and check every parcel on Saturdays, so that if anything was short in any of the parcels this client had inspected I could be positive that he had taken what was missing. I counted the stones in the first parcel (hundreds of them)—eight stones missing. I counted the next lot ; also a number missing, and so on through seven or eight lots. I locked my goods away and went to see my jeweller neighbour whom I informed of what had happened. He admitted that the man was a stranger who had come to his shop to buy loose diamonds, and as he himself had none he had brought him to me.

Then I went out to search the town for the light-fingered Chinaman. I realised after an hour's wandering about that I would make a poor detective, so I telephoned to the chief of the Secret Service. He sent his best men to investi-

gate, and at the end of a week they gave up the hunt and I all hope of ever again meeting that unprofitable customer. The following Monday, exactly a week after and at the same time in the morning, I heard voices in my outer office. I opened the door, and there was my jeweller friend with my tricky Chinese customer, *bras dessus, bras dessous*, as the French say, holding him safely by the arm so that he couldn't get away. He explained that the fellow had passed his shop and he had at once run out and seized him before he could fly. He had dragged him up two flights of stairs, and on every step the Chinaman had protested in a different key that he had never seen him in his life and what did he mean by this behaviour.

I phoned to the detective department again. Two Indian policemen armed with rifles and led by a European sergeant arrived in double-quick time and marched him off. A few days later he was brought up before the stipendiary, and it was disclosed that he was a notorious thief who preyed upon jewellers all over the East. His method was to pick the diamonds up with his extremely long finger-nails—which were shaped like miniature spades and filled with soft wax—a most ingenious method. The Chinese are a highly cultured race.

Rummaging in a secondhand bookshop to which I went occasionally, I came across a small pamphlet on spiritualism. From this I derived my first information on the subject. I remember that on a Saturday late in the afternoon I returned to my rooms at the hotel with an armful of secondhand books I had purchased, sat down on the verandah and became engrossed in the pamphlet. However, when I had read it through I cast it aside and said, "Piffle!" I was not in the least impressed.

Then I sat down to do some writing—perhaps a letter

or a few notes—and for some reason or other remained under the lamplight with a pen poised over the blank paper and deep in thought. My pen touched the paper and I found myself writing without my own volition. The pen traced a few lines and then stopped. There was written in a thin spidery scrawl not at all like my own hand the following: "Friend! You have seen the wonderful ivory balls the Chinese carve out of one solid piece of bone so that a score of spheres revolve freely within each other. The great universe is something like that: Learn not to scoff. I will give you proof that another than you has written these lines. Take up the pen again and sit with your mind a blank——"

I did as I was directed. As soon as the pen had again stopped moving I looked to see what had been inscribed. To my surprise there were no words written this time, but a drawing which took up no more space than would a shilling. I switched on the electric light, but still could not make out the details of the sketch. Before I could make out any detail I had to scrutinise it under my most powerful magnifying glass, and there unmistakably before my eyes was a grotesque but clearly drawn caricature of myself. The expression on my pictured face was that of utter foolishness.

Now those who know my limitations best know that I possess not even sufficient talent to draw upon paper the likeness of a chair in such a manner that it can be recognised as such. Though I frequently tried to repeat the experiment of automatic writing, I never achieved again results worth mentioning.

But it was all of a piece with certain other experiences which I have already recorded and with another occurrence that I am about to tell you and which happened on the following day.

The prominent Singapore merchant who had befriended me held with his hospitable wife the opinion that I was devoting too much time to business and study, and that I was in consequence not getting the necessary relaxation. In their kindness they insisted on calling every evening to take me for a spin into the country for a couple of hours. Although I enjoyed going out with them in their big powerful car and appreciated greatly the spirit which prompted them to give me this regular treat, I always felt that the native chauffeur, who was a truly marvellous driver, shared with my friend's wife a perfectly fiendish delight for speed. It was plain to me that these two, mistress and servant, derived a great thrill, too, from my apparent nervousness over the express-train rate with which we negotiated hair-pin turns on the narrow jolting roads. More than once the lady called me a coward when I begged her to have a care.

Well, on the evening in question there were four of us in the car besides the driver. There had been a thunder-storm in the afternoon and the roads were still wet. We had been travelling for a good three-quarters of an hour at what I considered a terrific speed. Already two or three times I had pointed out to my hostess that if she intended to give me a treat such speed entirely negatived her intention. Each time she had laughed and told the chauffeur to slow down a bit, and each time he would let her out again in the next few minutes. He was as incorrigible in that respect as his mistress.

Presently I heard a voice in my inner ear—distinctly a warning—and at the same time I was vouchsafed the vision of a huge tree that had fallen across the road and was blocking the whole width of it.

I at once told what I had heard and seen. The lady directed the chauffeur to slow down once more, and we

went on for another quarter of an hour much more slowly but still at a greater rate than I liked. Then as we went round a bend there was a yell from my friend who had been peering intently into the semi-darkness ahead of us ever since my warning. The driver brought the car to a stop in the nick of time with a great shriek of brakes. There in front of us, not 6 feet away, lay across the road a mighty tree brought down by the storm of the afternoon. It lay at such an angle that had we gone at great speed the lot of us would have been decapitated.

Many times since then have the three who sat with me in that car testified before others, not to a mere premonition on my part born of nervousness, but to my exact description of the danger that lay ahead of us. But I could not swear that it has made my friend or her chauffeur abandon their customary speed when out for a joy-ride.

In the course of my trading in pearls throughout the Far East, I met with a great variety of superstitions connected with that gem, but here in Malaya I became acquainted for the first time with the practice among well-to-do Chinese of placing one pearl in the mouth and one in each eye of a corpse prior to burial. When this was first told me I disbelieved it; but when, on one occasion, I visited a small but wealthy Malayan township in the tin-mining area, an old Chinaman came to me to inquire whether I could supply him with three good pearls and openly stated that if he bought them he would put them by to be used in connection with his own funeral arrangements. I could supply him; and no girl choosing the material for her wedding-dress could be more critical and fastidious over its quality and appearance than this old Chinaman was over his three "corpse pearls," as I entered them in my sales book.

From that day forward I regularly employed a man to

seek out elderly Chinamen who might be tempted to make provision toward their demise. It was quite a profitable side-line, and in a way appealed to me for its queerness. But I was not really sorry when my pushful "corpse pearl" traveller declared one day that every well-to-do Chinaman in Malaya had already been supplied by us, because I felt that the macabre savour of the undertaker's parlour pervaded this highly specialised job.

Amongst the many clients from all parts of Malaya who used to come to my office there was a young Chinaman who wanted to buy 1,000 dollars worth of diamonds on short credit. I made inquiries and found that his father, with whom he lived, had a most palatial home and kept two full-grown elephants. It appeared to me that a man who could afford to provide for two such creatures was surely good enough security for his son, and I parted with my diamonds—only to discover later that the son had bought them to buy sustenance for these pets with which, although he was terribly hard up, the old man could not bring himself to part. I did not get paid for my diamonds, and if every man could come into his own I should be entitled to take over the elephants. If I have not already claimed them it is because I have too small a garage.

I remember two incidents in particular amongst the many connected with my several visits to Kuala Lumpur and Penang. They are of so unusual a nature that I have never been able to find any explanation for either of them.

Prior to setting out for Kuala Lumpur on one occasion I had a very vivid dream. I saw myself in the big parlour of the Station Hotel, seated on a chaise-longue. There were only a few people about and in consequence there were ten times as many easy chairs in the room as there were guests. Yet a spectacled Indian whose features were quite distinct

in my dream, entering quickly through the swing doors as though filled with some purpose, made straight for the chaise-longue in which I was seated. After a moment or so he addressed me respectfully, told me he was a successful practising barrister in the locality, informed me that he was very unhappy, and related the reasons for his dejected state. He had, he said, come there on purpose to meet me, having been directed, in a dream of his own, to do so, and to put his case before me as I would advise him and give him peace of mind.

As I say, this dream was very vivid, but when on awakening I remembered it I thought it so stupid that I forgot all about it as soon as I had rubbed my eyes.

Imagine—no—not my surprise, but my utmost composure when I saw the Indian of my dream enter the parlour of the Station Hotel through the swing doors, and sit down by my side before I had realised that I had all unwittingly got into the very chaise-longue of my vision—although, just as in my dream, there were fifty other chairs to choose from.

The man spoke to me—confided in me—an utter stranger. As I had dreamed, he turned out to be a barrister of the district, and his perplexity was of the kind described by him in my vision. And because in that vision I had also learnt the solution to his trouble I was able to help him. He assured me he had gained peace and departed satisfied.

It was my first trip to Kuala Lumpur and I knew no one there; and although I had a letter of introduction to my broker-to-be, I only saw him days after this experience, for my new barrister friend knew everyone worth knowing and made things easy for me.

Of a different order was the Penang incident. This was the time when I met a stranger four times in one day, each

time under the oddest conditions, and then never saw him again nor ever knew his name.

At the post office in Penang I handed in a telegram. As I waited a European behind me made a few casual remarks as one will to pass the time in such places. He was carrying two boxes of cigars under his arm. In a moment or so he held out one of the boxes and begged me to accept it. I expressed my surprise at such an offer, but he insisted on my accepting it, in return for some service he *knew* I was going to render him before long. I thought that he was possibly a bit mad and to humour him took the cigars, thanked him and came away.

My broker in Penang was a well-known local merchant. He had made appointments for me with several important clients and we sped off in his car to keep them. He was an excellent driver, but at one point it looked as though we'd have a head-on collision with another car, although the road was wide enough for six cars to move abreast. We shaved past each other and went on, and as we passed I recognised the man in the other car as the one who had given me the cigars. He recognised me too, shook his finger at me and was gone.

An hour and a half later we were coming through the gates of a very big house into this same stretch of road. We pushed slowly out, each of us looking carefully to right and left as we came—not a car in sight down all the length of that long road. But as we turned and began to gather speed, a car appeared as though it had come out through some trap-door in the ground, and came hurtling towards us. As we came towards each other, head on, my broker swerved to the left, and the other driver, barely touching us, made for his own left and crashed with terrific impact into a great tree. It all happened so quickly that I

could not follow what happened next, but when I looked the car was crumpled up and there was what I thought to be a river of blood streaming from the car into the gutter. Of course, we ran to the assistance of those in the car. In front sat a Malay driver, his hands still gripping the wheel, his eyes closed as in death. But he was not dead, although bleeding from a multitude of cuts. What I had mistaken for a river of blood, however, was mainly the water escaping from the smashed radiator.

But in the fork of the great tree, not less than 12 feet from the ground sat, snugly wedged in a sitting posture with his spectacles on his nose and entirely unharmed, the man who had given me the box of cigars. We helped him down somehow, and as he was not even scratched we left him to his own devices, at his special request, and took the Malay in our car to the hospital. He had both knee-caps broken, but was lucky to escape at all.

That night at dinner in my hotel I saw the man of the cigars again. He was sitting at another table with two ladies. I rose to congratulate him on his lucky escape and to inquire about his condition. He looked at me blankly and said, "Excuse me, sir, you must have mistaken me for someone else !"

Dumbfounded I apologised, and was turning away when I caught a whisper behind me. "But how are the cigars ?" said the voice.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FIRE AT SEA

ON my bedside table I keep a brass ashtray made out of a German shell which was fired by the Turks at Basrah in the Persian Gulf. It was given to me as a keepsake by a ginger-headed Scot, a sea-captain in the merchant service somewhere in the East. We happened to share a cabin on a P. & O. liner homeward bound one trip. I slept by night and he by day, because he was on furlough and meant to have his fill of whisky and cards. And since I took pains not to disturb him during the daytime he voted me a good fellow and presented me with this keepsake on parting. But I was to meet him again.

Business took me to a place the very name of which, flavoured with spices, spelt romance to me: Malacca! The journey from Singapore by boat takes sixteen hours through the Rhio Straits. I was looking forward greatly to the trip, and we were to sail at two in the afternoon. When I got to the dock, however, I was informed that the boat on which I had booked had been despatched half an hour earlier to another port, and that I should have to wait in the broiling sun on the quay for at least an hour for the boat which the company was substituting for the run.

Well, I waited—and we sailed. It was a glorious day. The sea was as smooth as a mirror with just the slightest cool breeze to make the hour pleasant. I read for a while and got into conversation with the only two other cabin passengers on board until the steward announced that dinner was being served and we entered the saloon.

We waited for the captain to come down and take the

head of the table ; but a quarter of an hour passed and then the boy brought on the first course without waiting for him, explaining that the captain was detained on the bridge.

Presently the second course appeared on the table, and still the captain did not appear. I glanced through the open door of the dining-saloon and noticed that the ship's officers were nervously pacing to and fro outside. Presently I saw one of the quartermasters and some of the crew walking past with their lifebelts on. I had no stomach for food then, and began to ask questions.

The stewards said it was nothing ; the officers looked me up and down and said that there was nothing to worry about, and would I please go back to my pudding. I thought this was a great insult because I had not yet finished my fish. But the more secretive they were, the more I wanted to know what was up, particularly when presently we increased our speed and a lifeboat was swung out over the side as though in readiness. I thought it was about time to put on my own lifebelt and select a comfortable raft.

I looked in the direction to which we were steaming. There in the great distance was what appeared to be the setting sun when, like a ball of fire, he dips into the cool ocean for a moment and is gone. But this was not the time of day for the sun to set, and at last I realised that a big ship was on fire out there on the horizon. Faster and faster her turbines drove our ship, while those of us who stood on deck, awed and shaking, remained, all dinner forgotten, looking intently at the growing ball of fire. When we came within three miles of the burning craft we could see every spar and rope on her, could even make out the smaller deck cargo in her stern. When the distance was decreased to two miles we felt as though the flames were licking our

faces, the heat was so great. When we came within a mile from her our engines came to a dead stop. We lost all way and floated quietly on the placid water. Several lifeboats were manned and lowered. I remember praying for those on board the stricken vessel, for it was a terrible sight; and yet it was so grand that while I prayed I could not help being glad that I was there to see.

She was a big ship, as craft go in these waters; in fact she was the very ship I had intended to sail in. Now she lay wrapt in flames, and although we stood off a mile away I could hardly bear the heat that reached us, so that I had to go to the starboard side every now and then for a breath of air. But not for long, for I would not miss a single phase of the drama.

As the lifeboats from our ship were rowed towards the only part where they stood in no danger of being set on fire by the flaming rivers of oil and petrol, the principal cargo of the doomed vessel, we heard the crackling of the woodwork coming clearly over the still water, the sound of falling masts, burnt through by the fire, and saw gigantic flames shoot up which threw the general conflagration into yet greater relief. On neither deck could we see a single soul; neither forrard nor aft a living thing, save the spirit which dwells in flames. Then, as we followed the progress of the lifeboats, I saw hidden by the shadow of the stern and hanging on to the anchor-chains, but half immersed in the water, three human forms. Would our boats reach them in time? The need for haste grew ever more urgent, for now one explosion followed quickly upon another. Barrels and cases containing highly inflammable materials poured out their contents as they burst, and from all sides ran rivers of fire, like broad streams of liquid silver in the ocean. Fortunately the vessel's stern remained compara-

tively unthreatened. Our boats reached their mark. I saw the three men being taken from the anchor-chain to which they had clung. Back came the boats out of that terrible zone of flame and heat. We cruised round for an hour or so in ever widening circles, hoping to pick up a boat or a drifting spar holding more survivors, but there was no other living thing to be seen. But as the vessel started to change her direction, her work of rescue done, I thought I heard a voice hailing us. I told the first officer. He strained his ears and his eyes, and said I had imagined it. We were all overwrought, and I accepted the likelihood of my having been mistaken. We steamed towards Malacca, without more ado.

Three days later I returned to Singapore. I sat at lunch in my hotel. Someone tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Don't you know me?"

Of course I did. It was my ginger-headed Scots sea-captain, he who had given me the brass ashtray for a keepsake.

"Well, Mac," I said, "what are you doing in Singapore?"

"Not much," he replied; "only giving evidence on the burning of that ship in the Straits of Rhio t'other day."

"And what do *you* know about her?" I queried.

"Only this," he remarked, with a wry smile. "That I was her master."

I told him that I was on the other ship which had gone to her rescue, and that I had heard a voice in the water crying for help as we came away.

He said, "It was me ye heard, and I cursed the lot of ye when you left me to the bloody sharks. But a Chink fishing boat came along later and picked me up."

"It was terrible," I commented. But Mac would only

say that it was all in the game and that this was his fourth great mishap: twice shipwrecked, once torpedoed, and now "smoked out," as he called it. "Take my word for it," he sang out as he crossed over to some other table, "I shall get hanged in the end, for I'm not built for drowning!"

But I am afraid Mac was rather dogmatic in his pronouncement, for I've heard of a sea captain who, boy and man, crossed the Pacific in sail and steam for forty years, and was finally drowned in his own bath at home; and I also know of a great financier who had manœuvred ponderous deals for decades, and had juggled with tens of millions of money, only to be made bankrupt in the end by his fishmonger.

After all, the great charm of life lies in its uncertainty. And that is a good point on which to end my present tale. If I am abrupt, forgive it. In real life things happen without formality and end as abruptly. By your leave, therefore, I am a plain trader and would finish like one, without fuss.

But what next? I can only be sure that it won't be dull!

